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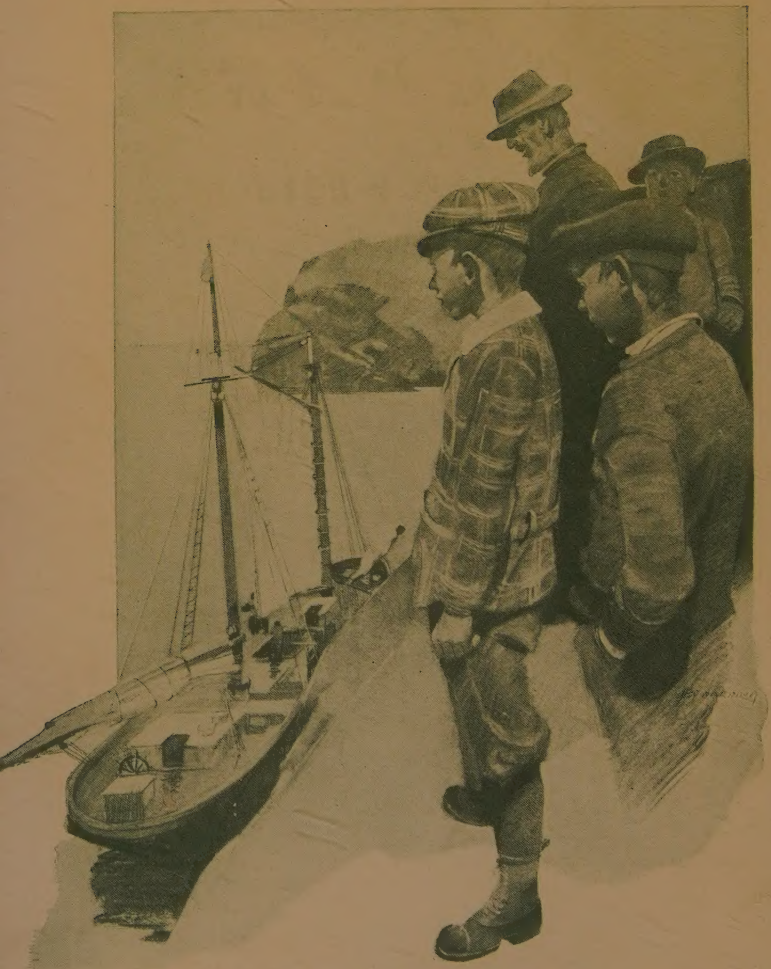

BILL O' BURNT BAY AND THE BOYS OF THE *SPOT CASH* COULD NOT FATHOM THE MYSTERY OF THE *BLACK EAGLE*.

BILLY TOPSAIL & COMPANY

A STORY FOR BOYS

By

NORMAN DUNCAN

Author of "The Adventures of Billy Topsail," "Doctor Luke of The Labrador," "The Mother," "Dr. Grenfell's Parish"

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To
Chauncey Lewis
and to
"Buster,"
good friends both,
sometimes to recall to them
places and occasions
at
Mike Marr's:
Dead Man's Point, Rolling Ledge, the
Canoe Landing, the swift and
wilful waters of the West Branch,
Squaw Mountain, the trail
to Dead Stream, the raft
on Horseshoe,
the Big Fish, the
gracious kindness of the
L. L. of E. O.,
(as well as her sandwiches),
and the never-to-be-forgotten flap-
jacks that "didn't look it"
but were indeed "all
there."

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The publishers acknowledge the courtesy of *The Youth's Companion* and *Outing* for the use of various illustrations appearing originally in these periodicals.

BILLY TOPSAIL & COMPANY

CHAPTER I

In Which Jimmie Grimm, Not Being Able to Help It, Is Born At Buccaneer Cove, Much to His Surprise, and Tog, the Wolf-Dog, Feels the Lash of a Seal-hide Whip and Conceives an Enmity

YOUNG Jimmie Grimm began life at Buccaneer Cove of the Labrador. It was a poor place to begin, of course; but Jimmie had had nothing to do with that. It was by Tog, with the eager help of two hungry gray wolves, that he was taught to take care of the life into which, much to his surprise, he had been ushered. Tog was a dog with a bad name; and everybody knows that a dog with a bad name should be hanged forthwith. It should have happened to Tog. At best he was a wolfish beast. His father was a wolf; and in the end

Tog was as lean and savage and cunningly treacherous as any wolf of the gray forest packs. When he had done with Jimmie Grimm—and when Jimmie Grimm's father had done with Tog—Jimmie Grimm had learned a lesson that he never could recall without a gasp and a quick little shudder.

"I jus' don't like t' think o' Tog," he told Billy Topsail and Archie Armstrong, long afterwards.

"You weren't *afraid* of him, were you?" Archie Armstrong demanded, a bit scornfully.

"*Was* I?" Jimmie snorted. "Huh!"

The business with Tog happened before old Jim Grimm moved south to Ruddy Cove of the Newfoundland coast, disgusted with the fishing of Buccaneer. It was before Jimmie Grimm had fallen in with Billy Topsail and Donald North, before he had ever clapped eyes on Bagg, the London gutter-snipe, or had bashfully pawed the gloved hand of Archie Armstrong, Sir Archibald's son. It was before Donald North cured himself of fear and the *First Venture* had broken into a blaze in a gale of wind off the Chunks. It was before Billy Topsail, a lad of wits, had held a candle over the powder barrel, when the wreckers boarded the *Spot Cash*. It

was before Bill o' Burnt Bay had been rescued from a Miquelon jail and the *Heavenly Home* was cut out of St. Pierre Harbour in the foggy night.

It was also before the *Spot Cash* had fallen foul of the plot to scuttle the *Black Eagle*. It was before the big gale and all the adventures of that northward trading voyage. In short, it was before Jim Grimm moved up from the Labrador to Ruddy Cove for better fishing.

Tog had a bad name. On the Labrador coast all dogs have bad names; nor, if the truth must be told, does the reputation do them any injustice. If evil communications corrupt good manners, the desperate character of Tog's deeds, no less than the tragic manner of his end, may be accounted for. At any rate, long before his abrupt departure from the wilderness trails and snow-covered rock of Buccaneer Cove, he had earned the worst reputation of all the pack.

It began in the beginning. When Tog was eight weeks old his end was foreseen. He was then little more than a soft, fluffy, black-and-white ball, awkwardly perambulating on four absurdly bowed legs. Martha, Jim Grimm's

wife, one day cast the lean scraps of the midday meal to the pack. What came to pass so amazed old Jim Grimm that he dropped his splitting-knife and stared agape.

"An' would you look at that little beast!" he gasped. "That one's a wonder for badness!"

The snarling, scrambling heap of dogs, apparently inextricably entangled, had all at once been reduced to order. Instead of a confusion of taut legs and teeth and bristling hair, there was a precise half-circle of gaunt beasts, squatted at a respectful distance from Tog's mother, hopelessly licking their chops, while, with hair on end and fangs exposed and dripping, she kept them off.

"It ain't Jinny," Jim remarked. "You can't blame she. It's that little pup with the black eye."

You couldn't blame Jenny. Last of all would it occur to Martha Grimm, with a child of her own to rear, to call her in the wrong. With a litter of five hearty pups to provide for, Jenny was animated by a holy maternal instinct. But Tog, which was the one with the black eye, was not to be justified. He was imitating his mother's tactics with diabolical success. A half-circle of whimpering puppies, keeping a respectful dis-

tance, watched in grieved surprise, while, with hair on end and tiny fangs occasionally exposed, he devoured the scraps of the midday meal.

"A wonder for badness!" Jim Grimm repeated.

"'Give a dog a bad name,'" quoted Martha, quick, like the woman she was, to resent snap-judgment of the young, "'an' ——'"

"'Hang un,'" Jim concluded. "Well," he added, "I wouldn't be s'prised if it *did* come t' that."

It did.

In Tog's eyes there was never the light of love and humour—no amiable jollity. He would come fawning, industriously wagging his hinder parts, like puppies of more favoured degree; but all the while his black eyes were alert, hard, infinitely suspicious and avaricious. Not once, I am sure, did affection or gratitude lend them beauty. A beautiful pup he was, nevertheless—fat and white, awkwardly big, his body promising splendid strength. Even when he made war on the fleas—and he waged it unceasingly—the vigour and skill of attack, the originality of method, gave him a certain distinction. But his

eyes were never well disposed; the pup was neither trustful nor to be trusted.

"If he lives t' the age o' three," said Jim Grimm, with a pessimistic wag of the head, "'twill be more by luck than good conduct."

"Ah, dad," said Jimmie Grimm, "you jus' leave un t' me!"

"Well, Jimmie," drawled Jim Grimm, "it might teach you more about dogs than you know. I don't mind if I *do* leave un t' you—for a while."

"Hut!" Jimmie boasted. "*I'll* master un."

"May *be*," said Jim Grimm.

It was Jimmie Grimm who first put Tog in the traces. This was in the early days of Tog's first winter—and of Jimmie's seventh. The dog was a lusty youngster then; better nourished than the other dogs of Jim Grimm's pack, no more because of greater strength and daring than a marvellous versatility in thievery. In a bored sort of way, being at the moment lazy with food stolen from Sam Butt's stage, Tog submitted. He yawned, stretched his long legs, and gave inopportune attention to a persistent flea near the small of his back. When, however, the butt of Jimmie's whip fell smartly on his flank, he was surprised into an appreciation of the fact that a

Courtesy of "The Outing Magazine"

TOG THAWED INTO LIMP AND SERVILE AMIABILITY.

serious attempt was being made to curtail his freedom; and he was at once alive with resentful protest.

"Hi, Tog!" Jimmie complained. "Bide still!"

Tog slipped from Jimmie's grasp and bounded off. He turned with a snarl.

"Here, Tog!" cried Jimmie.

Tog came—stepping warily over the snow. His head was low, his king-hairs bristling, his upper lip lifted.

"Ha, Tog, b'y!" said Jimmie, ingratiatingly.

Tog thawed into limp and servile amiability. The long, wiry white hair of his neck fell flat; he wagged his bushy white tail; he pawed the snow and playfully tossed his long, pointed nose as he crept near. But had Jimmie Grimm been more observant, more knowing, he would have perceived that the light in the lanky pup's eyes had not mellowed.

"Good dog!" crooned Jimmie, stretching out an affectionate hand.

Vanished, then, in a flash, every symptom of Tog's righteousness. His long teeth closed on Jimmie's small hand with a snap. Jimmie struck instantly—and struck hard. The butt of the

whip caught Tog on the nose. He dropped the hand and leaped away with a yelp.

"Now, me b'y," thought Jimmie Grimm, staring into the quivering dog's eyes, not daring to glance at his own dripping hand, "I'll master *you!*"

But it was no longer a question of mastery. The issue was life or death. Tog was now of an age to conceive murder. Moreover, he was of a size to justify an attempt upon Jimmie. And murder was in his heart. He crouched, quivering, his wolfish eyes fixed upon the boy's blazing blue ones. For a moment neither antagonist ventured attack. Both waited.

It was Jimmie who lost patience. He swung his long dog whip. The lash cracked in Tog's face. With a low growl, the dog rushed, and before the boy could evade the attack, the dog had him by the leg. Down came the butt of the whip. Tog released his hold and leaped out of reach. He pawed about, snarling, shaking his bruised head.

This advantage the boy sought to pursue. He advanced—alert, cool, ready to strike. Tog retreated. Jimmie rushed upon him. At a bound, Tog passed, turned, and came again.

Before Jimmie had well faced him, Tog had leaped for his throat. Down went the boy, overborne by the dog's weight, and by the impact, which he was not prepared to withstand. But Tog was yet a puppy, unpracticed in fight; he had missed the grip. And a heavy stick, in the hands of Jimmie's father, falling mercilessly upon him, put him in yelping retreat.

"I 'low, Jimmie," drawled Jim Grimm, while he helped the boy to his feet, "that that dog *is* teachin' you more 'n you knowed."

"I 'low, dad," replied the breathless Jimmie, "that he teached me nothin' more than I forgot."

"I wouldn't forget again," said Jim.

Jimmie did not deign to reply.

CHAPTER II

In Which Jimmie Grimm is Warned Not to Fall Down, and Tog, Confirmed in Bad Ways, Raids Ghost Tickle, Commits Murder, Runs With the Wolves, Plots the Death of Jimmie Grimm and Reaches the End of His Rope

JIMMIE GRIMM'S father broke Tog to the traces before the winter was over. A wretched time the perverse beast had of it. Labrador dogs are not pampered idlers; in winter they must work or starve—as must men, the year round. But Tog had no will for work, acknowledged no master save the cruel, writhing whip; and the whip was therefore forever flecking his ears or curling about his flanks. Moreover, he was a sad shirk. Thus he made more trouble for himself. When his team-mates discovered the failing—and this was immediately—they pitilessly worried his hind legs. Altogether, in his half-grown days, Tog led a yelping, bleeding life of it; whereby he got no more than his deserts.

Through the summer he lived by theft when

thievery was practicable; at other times he went fishing for himself with an ill will. Meantime, he developed strength and craft, both in extraordinary degree. There was not a more successful criminal in the pack, nor was there a more despicable bully. When the first snow fell, Tog was master at Buccaneer Cove, and had already begun to raid the neighbouring settlement at Ghost Tickle. Twice he was known to have adventured there. After the first raid, he licked his wounds in retirement for two weeks; after the second, which was made by night, they found a dead dog at Ghost Tickle.

Thereafter, Tog entered Ghost Tickle by daylight, and with his teeth made good his right to come and go at will. It was this that left him open to suspicion when the Ghost Tickle tragedy occurred. Whether or not Tog was concerned in that affair, nobody knows. They say at Ghost Tickle that he plotted the murder and led the pack; but the opinion is based merely upon the fact that he was familiar with the paths and lurking places of the Tickle—and, possibly, upon the fact of his immediate and significant disappearance from the haunts of men.

News came from Ghost Tickle that Jonathan

Wall had come late from the ice with a seal. Weary with the long tramp, he had left the carcass at the waterside.

"Billy," he said to his young son, forgetting the darkness and the dogs, "go fetch that swile up."

Billy was gone a long time.

"I wonder what's keepin' Billy," his mother said.

They grew uneasy, at last; and presently they set out to search for the lad. Neither child nor seal did they ever see again; but they came upon the shocking evidences of what had occurred.

And they blamed Tog of Buccaneer Cove.

For a month or more Tog was lost to sight; but an epidemic had so reduced the number of serviceable dogs that he was often in Jim Grimm's mind. Jim very heartily declared that Tog should have a berth with the team if starvation drove him back; not that he loved Tog, said he, but that he needed him. But Tog seemed to be doing well enough in the wilderness. He did not soon return. Once they saw him. It was when Jim and Jimmie were bound

home from Laughing Cove. Of a sudden Jim halted the team.

"Do you see that, Jimmie, b'y?" he asked, pointing with his whip to the white crest of a near-by hill.

"Dogs!" Jimmie ejaculated.

"Take another squint," said Jim.

"Dogs," Jimmie repeated.

"Wolves," drawled Jim. "An' do you see the beast with the black eye?"

"Why, dad," Jimmie exclaimed, "'tis Tog!"

"I 'low," said Jim, "that Tog don't need us no more."

But Tog did. He came back—lean and fawning. No more abject contrition was ever shown by dog before. He was starving. They fed him at the usual hour; and not one ounce more than the usual amount of food did he get. Next day he took his old place in the traces and helped haul Jim Grimm the round of the fox traps. But that night Jim Grimm lost another dog; and in the morning Tog had again disappeared into the wilderness. Jimmie Grimm was glad. Tog had grown beyond him. The lad could control the others of the pack; but he was helpless against Tog.

"I isn't so wonderful sorry, myself," said Jim. "I 'low, Jimmie," he added, "that Tog don't like *you*."

"No, that he doesn't," Jimmie promptly agreed. "All day yesterday he snooped around, with an eye on me. Looked to me as if he was waitin' for me to fall down."

"Jimmie!" said Jim Grimm, gravely.

"Ay, sir?"

"You *mustn't* fall down. Don't matter whether Tog's about or not. If the dogs is near, *don't you fall down!*"

"Not if I knows it," said Jimmie.

It was a clear night in March. The moon was high. From the rear of Jim Grimm's isolated cottage the white waste stretched far to the wilderness. The dogs of the pack were sound asleep in the outhouse. An hour ago the mournful howling had ceased for the night. Half-way to the fish-stage, whither he was bound on his father's errand, Jimmie Grimm came to a startled full stop.

"What was that?" he mused.

A dark object, long and lithe, had seemed to slip like a shadow into hiding below the drying-

Courtesy of "The Outing Magazine"

INSTINCTIVELY, HE COVERED HIS THROAT WITH HIS ARMS WHEN TOG FELL UPON HIM.

flake. Jimmie continued to muse. What had it been? A prowling dog? Then he laughed a little at his own fears—and continued on his way. But he kept watch on the flake; and so intent was he upon this, so busily was he wondering whether or not his eyes had tricked him, that he stumbled over a stray billet of wood, and fell sprawling.

He was not alarmed, and made no haste to rise; but had he then seen what emerged from the shadow of the flake he would instantly have been in screaming flight toward the kitchen door.

The onslaught of Tog and the two wolves was made silently.

There was not a howl, not a growl, not even an eager snarl. They came leaping, with Tog in the lead—and they came silently. Jimmie caught sight of them when he was half-way to his feet. He had but time to call his father's name; and he knew that the cry would not be heard. Instinctively, he covered his throat with his arms when Tog fell upon him; and he was relieved to feel Tog's teeth in his shoulder. He felt no pain—not any more, at any rate, than a sharp stab in the knee. He was merely sensible

of the fact that the vital part had not yet been reached.

In the savage joy of attack, Jimmie's assailants forgot discretion. Snarls and growls escaped them while they worried the small body. In the manner of wolves, too, they snapped at each other. The dogs in the outhouse awoke, cocked their ears, came in a frenzy to the conflict; not to save Jimmie Grimm, but to participate in his destruction. Jimmie was prostrate beneath them all—still protecting his throat; not regarding his other parts.

And by this confusion Jim Grimm was aroused from a sleepy stupor by the kitchen fire.

"I wonder," said he, "what's the matter with them dogs."

"I'm not able t' make out," his wife replied, puzzled, "but ——"

"Hark!" cried Jim.

They listened.

"Quick!" Jimmie's mother screamed. "They're at Jimmie!"

With an axe in his hand, and with merciless wrath in his heart, Jim Grimm descended upon the dogs. He stretched the uppermost dead. A second blow broke the back of a wolf. The

third sent a dog yelping to the outhouse with a useless hind leg. The remaining dogs decamped. Their howls expressed pain in a degree to delight Jim Grimm and to inspire him with deadly strength and purpose. Tog and the surviving wolf fled.

"Jimmie!" Jim Grimm called.

Jimmie did not answer.

"They've killed you!" his father sobbed. "Jimmie, b'y, is you dead? Mother," he moaned to his wife, who had now come panting up with a broomstick, "they've gone an' killed our Jimmie!"

Jimmie was unconscious when his father carried him into the house. It was late in the night, and he was lying in his own little bed, and his mother had dressed his wounds, when he revived. And Tog was then howling under his window; and there Tog remained until dawn, listening to the child's cries of agony.

Two days later, Jim Grimm, practicing unscrupulous deception, lured Tog into captivity. That afternoon the folk of Buccaneer Cove solemnly hanged him by the neck until he was dead, which is the custom in that land. I am

glad that they disposed of him. He had a noble body—strong and beautiful, giving delight to the beholder, capable of splendid usefulness. But he had not one redeeming trait of character to justify his existence.

"I wonder why Tog was so bad, dad," Jimmie mused, one day, when, as they mistakenly thought, he was near well again.

"I s'pose," Jim explained, "'twas because his father was a wolf."

Little Jimmie Grimm was not the same after that. For some strange reason he went lame, and the folk of Buccaneer Cove said that he was "took with the rheumatiz."

"Wisht I could be cured," the little fellow used to sigh.

CHAPTER III

In Which Little Jimmie Grimm Goes Lame and His Mother Discovers the Whereabouts of a Cure

LITTLE Jimmie Grimm was then ten years old. He had been an active, merry lad, before the night of the assault of Tog and the two wolves—inclined to scamper and shout, given to pranks of a kindly sort. His affectionate, light-hearted disposition had made him the light of his mother's eyes, and of his father's, too, for, child though he was, lonely Jim Grimm found him a comforting companion. But he was now taken with what the folk of Buccaneer Cove called "rheumatiz o' the knee." There were days when he walked in comfort; but there were also times when he fell to the ground in a sudden agony and had to be carried home. There were weeks when he could not walk at all. He was not now so merry as he had been. He was more affectionate; but his eyes did not flash in the old way, nor were

his cheeks so fat and rosy. Jim Grimm and the lad's mother greatly desired to have him cured.

"'Twould be like old times," Jim Grimm said once, when Jimmie was put to bed, "if Jimmie was only well."

"I'm afeared," the mother sighed, "that he'll never be well again."

"For fear you're right, mum," said Jim Grimm, "we must make him happy every hour he's with us. Hush, mother! Don't cry, or I'll be cryin', too!"

Nobody connected Jimmie Grimm's affliction with the savage teeth of Tog.

It was Jimmie's mother who discovered the whereabouts of a cure. Hook's Kurepain was the thing to do it! Who could deny the virtues of that "healing balm"? They were set forth in print, in type both large and small, on a creased and dirty remnant of the *Montreal Weekly Globe and Family Messenger*, which had providentially strayed into that far port of the Labrador. Who could dispute the works of "the invaluable discovery"? Was it not a positive cure for bruises, sprains, chilblains, cracked hands, stiffness of the ioints, contraction

of the muscles, numbness of the limbs, neuralgia, rheumatism, pains in the chest, warts, frost bites, sore throat, quinsy, croup, and various other ills? Was it not an excellent hair restorer, as well? If it had cured millions (and apparently it had), why shouldn't it cure little Jimmie Grimm? So Jimmie's mother longed with her whole heart for a bottle of the "boon to suffering humanity."

"I've found something, Jim Grimm," said she, a teasing twinkle in her eye, when, that night, Jimmie's father came in from the snowy wilderness, where he had made the round of his fox traps.

"Have you, now?" he asked, curiously. "What is it?"

"'Tis something," said she, "t' make you glad."

"Come, tell me!" he cried, his eyes shining.

"I've heard you say," she went on, smiling softly, "that you'd be willin' t' give anything t' find it. I've heard you say that——"

"'Tis a silver fox!"

"I've heard you say," she continued, shaking her head, "'Oh,' I've heard you say, 'if I could *only* find it I'd be happy.'"

"Tell me!" he coaxed. "Please tell me!"

She laid a hand on his shoulder. The remnant of the *Montreal Weekly Globe and Family Messenger* she held behind her.

"'Tis a cure for Jimmie," said she.

"No!" he cried, incredulous; but there was yet the ring of hope in his voice. "Have you, now?"

"Hook's Kurepain," said she, "never failed yet."

"'Tis wonderful!" said Jim Grimm.

She spread the newspaper on the table and placed her finger at that point of the list where the cure of rheumatism was promised.

"Read that," said she, "an' you'll find 'tis all true."

Jim Grimm's eye ran up to the top of the page. His wife waited, a smile on her lips. She was anticipating a profound impression.

"'Beauty has wonderful charms,'" Jim Grimm read. "'Few men can withstand the witchcraft of a lovely face. All hearts are won ——'"

"No, no!" the mother interrupted, hastily. "That's the marvellous Oriental Beautifier. I been readin' that, too. But 'tis not that. 'Tis lower down. Beginnin', 'At last the universal remedy of Biblical times.' Is you got it yet?"

"Ay, sure!"

And thereupon Jim Grimm of Buccaneer Cove discovered that a legion of relieved and rejuvenated rheumatics had without remuneration or constraint sung the virtues of the Kurepain and the praises of Hook. Poor ignorant Jim Grimm did not for a moment doubt the existence of the Well-Known Traveller, the Family Doctor, the Minister of the Gospel, the Champion of the World. He was ready to admit that the cure had been found.

"I'm willin' t' believe," said he, solemnly, the while gazing very earnestly into his wife's eyes, "that 'twould do Jimmie a world o' good."

"Read on," said she.

"'It costs money to make the Kurepain,'" Jim read, aloud. "'It is not a sugar-and-water remedy. It is a *cure*, manufactured at *great expense*. Good medicines come *high*. But the peerless Kurepain is *cheap* when compared with the worthless substitutes now on the market and sold for just as good. Our price is five dollars a bottle; three bottles guaranteed to cure.'"

Jim Grimm stopped dead. He looked up. His wife steadily returned his glance. The Labrador dweller is a poor man—a very poor man.

Rarely does a dollar of hard cash slip into his hand. And this was hard cash. Five dollars a bottle! Five dollars for that which was neither food nor clothing!

"'Tis fearful!" he sighed.

"But read on," said she.

"'In order to introduce the Kurepain into this locality, we have set aside *one thousand bottles* of this *incomparable* medicine. That number, *and no more*, we will dispose of at four dollars a bottle. Do not make a mistake. When the supply is exhausted, the price will *rise* to eight dollars a bottle, owing to a scarcity of one of the ingredients. We honestly advise you, if you are in pain or suffering, to take advantage of this *rare* opportunity. A word to the wise is sufficient. Order to-day.'"

"'Tis a great bargain, Jim," the mother whispered.

"Ay," Jim answered, dubiously.

His wife patted his hand. "When Jimmie's cured," she went on, "he could help you with the traps, an'——"

"'Tis not for *that* I wants un cured," Jim Grimm flashed. "I'm willin' an' able for me labour. 'Tis not for that. I'm just thinkin' all

the time about seein' him run about like he used to. That's what *I* wants."

"Doesn't you think, Jim, that we could manage it—if we tried wonderful hard?"

"'Tis accordin' t' what fur I traps, mum, afore the ice goes an' the steamer comes. I'm hopin' we'll have enough left over t' buy the cure."

"You're a good father, Jim," the mother said, at last. "I knows you'll do for the best. Leave us wait until the spring time comes."

"Ay," he agreed; "an' we'll say nar a word t' little Jimmie."

They laid hold on the hope in Hook's Kurepain. Life was brighter, then. They looked forward to the cure. The old merry, scampering Jimmie, with his shouts and laughter and gambols and pranks, was to return to them. When, as the winter dragged along, Jim Grimm brought home the fox skins from the wilderness, Jimmie fondled them, and passed upon their quality, as to colour and size and fur. Jim Grimm and his wife exchanged smiles. Jimmie did not know that upon the quality and number of the skins, which he delighted to stroke and pat, depended his cure. Let the winter pass! Let the ice move out from the coast! Let the

steamer come for the letters! Let her go and return again! *Then* Jimmie should know.

"We'll be able t' have *one* bottle, whatever," said the mother.

"'Twill be more than that, mum," Jim Grimm answered, confidently. "We wants our Jimmie cured."

CHAPTER IV

In Which Jimmie Grimm Surprises a Secret, Jim Grimm makes a Rash Promise, and a Tourist From the States Discovers the Marks of Tog's Teeth

WITH spring came the great disappointment. The snow melted from the hills; wild flowers blossomed where the white carpet had lain; the ice was ready to break and move out to sea with the next wind from the west. There were no more foxes to be caught. Jim Grimm bundled the skins, strapped them on his back, and took them to the storekeeper at Shelter Harbour, five miles up the coast; and when their value had been determined he came home disconsolate.

Jimmie's mother had been watching from the window. "Well?" she said, when the man came in.

"'Tis not enough," he groaned. "I'm sorry, mum; but 'tis not enough."

She said nothing, but waited for him to continue; for she feared to give him greater distress.

"'Twas a fair price he gave me," Jim Grimm continued. "I'm not complainin' o' that. But there's not enough t' do more than keep us in food, with pinchin', till we sells the fish in the fall. I'm sick, mum—I'm fair sick an' miserable along o' disappointment."

"'Tis sad t' think," said the mother, "that Jimmie's not t' be cured—after all."

"For the want o' twelve dollars!" he sighed.

They were interrupted by the clatter of Jimmie's crutches, coming in haste from the inner room. Then entered Jimmie.

"I heered what you said," he cried, his eyes blazing, his whole worn little body fairly quivering with excitement. "I heered you say 'cure.' Is I t' be cured?"

They did not answer.

"Father! Mama! Did you say I was t' be cured?"

"Hush, dear!" said the mother.

"I can't hush. I wants t' know. Father, tell me. Is I t' be cured?"

"Jim," said the mother to Jim Grimm, "tell un."

"You is!" Jim shouted, catching Jimmie in his arms, and rocking him like a baby. "You

is t' be cured. Debt or no debt, lad, I'll see you cured!"

The matter of credit was easily managed. The old storekeeper at Shelter Harbour did not hesitate. Credit? Of course, he would give Jim Grimm that. "Jim," said he, "I've knowed you for a long time, an' I knows you t' be a good man. I'll fit you out for the summer an' the winter, if you wants me to, an' you can take your own time about payin' the bill." And so Jim Grimm withdrew twelve dollars from the credit of his account.

They began to keep watch on the ice—to wish for a westerly gale, that the white waste might be broken and dispersed.

"Father," said Jimmie, one night, when the man was putting him to bed, "how long will it be afore that there Kurepain comes?"

"I 'low the steamer'll soon be here."

"Ay?"

"An' then she'll take the letter with the money."

"Ay?"

"An' she'll be gone about a month an' a fortnight, an' then she'll be back with——"

"The cure!" cried Jimmie, giving his father

an affectionate dig in the ribs. "She'll be back with the cure!"

"Go t' sleep, lad."

"I can't," Jimmie whispered. "I can't for joy o' thinkin' o' that cure."

By and by the ice moved out, and, in good time, the steamer came. It was at the end of a blustering day, with the night falling thick. Passengers and crew alike—from the grimy stokers to the shivering American tourists—were relieved to learn, when the anchor went down with a splash and a rumble, that the "old man" was to "hang her down" until the weather turned "civil."

Accompanied by the old schoolmaster, who was to lend him aid in registering the letter to the Kurepain Company, Jim Grimm went aboard in the punt. It was then dark.

"You knows a Yankee when you sees one," said he, when they reached the upper deck. "Point un out, an' I'll ask un."

"Ay, *I'm* travelled," said the schoolmaster, importantly. "And 'twould be wise to ask about this Kurepain Company before you post the letter."

Thus it came about that Jim Grimm timidly approached two gentlemen who were chatting merrily in the lee of the wheel-house.

"Do you know the Kurepain, sir?" he asked.

"Eh? What?" the one replied.

"Hook's, sir."

"Hook's? In the name of wonder, man, Hook's what?"

"Kurepain, sir."

"Hook's Kurepain," said the stranger. "Doctor," addressing his companion, "do you recommend ——"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Then you do not?" said the other.

The doctor eyed Jim Grimm. "Why do you ask?" he inquired.

"'Tis for me little son, sir," Jim replied. "He've a queer sort o' rheumaticks. We're thinkin' the Kurepain will cure un. It have cured a Minister o' the Gospel, sir, an' a Champion o' the World; an' we was allowin' that it wouldn't have much trouble t' cure little Jimmie Grimm. They's as much as twelve dollars, sir, in this here letter, which I'm sendin' away. I'm wantin' t' know, sir, if they'll send the cure if I sends the money."

The doctor was silent for a moment. "Where do you live?" he asked, at last.

Jim pointed to a far-off light. "Jimmie will be at that window," he said, "lookin' out at the steamer's lights."

"Do you care for a run ashore?" asked the doctor, turning to his fellow tourist.

"If it would not overtax you."

"No, no—I'm strong enough, now. The voyage has put me on my feet again. Come—let us go."

Jim Grimm took them ashore in the punt; guided them along the winding, rocky path; led them into the room where Jimmie sat at the window. The doctor felt of Jimmie's knee, and asked him many questions. Then he held a whispered consultation with his companion and the schoolmaster; and of their conversation Jimmie caught such words and phrases as "slight operation" and "chloroform" and "that table" and "poor light, but light enough" and "rough and ready sort of work" and "no danger." Then Jim Grimm was dispatched to the steamer with the doctor's friend; and when they came back the man carried a bag in his hand. The doctor asked Jimmie a question, and

Jimmie nodded his head. Whereupon, the doctor called him a brave lad, and sent Jim Grimm out to the kitchen to keep his wife company for a time, first requiring him to bring a pail of water and another lamp.

When they called Jim Grimm in again—he knew what they were about, and it seemed a long, long time before the call came—little Jimmie was lying on the couch, sick and pale, with his knee tightly bandaged, but with his eyes glowing.

"Mama! Father!" the boy whispered, exultantly. "They says I'm cured."

"Yes," said the doctor; "he'll be all right, now. His trouble was not rheumatism. It was caused by a fragment of the bone, broken off at the knee-joint. At least, that's as plain as I can make it to you. He was bitten by a dog, was he not? So he says. And he remembers that he felt a stab of pain in his knee at the time. That or the fall probably accounts for it. At any rate, I have removed that fragment. He'll be all right, after a bit. I've told the schoolmaster how to take care of him, and I'll leave some medicine, and—well—he'll soon be all right."

When the doctor was about to step from the punt to the steamer's ladder, half an hour later, Jim Grimm held up a letter to him.

"'Tis for you, sir," he said.

"What's this?" the doctor demanded.

"'Tis for you to keep, sir," Jim answered, with dignity. "'Tis the money for the work you done."

"Money!" cried the doctor. "Why, really," he stammered, "I—you see, this is my vacation —and I——"

"I 'low, sir," said Jim, quietly, "that you'll 'blige me."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the doctor, being wise, "that I will!"

Jimmie Grimm got well long before it occurred to his father that the fishing at Buccaneer Cove was poor and that he might do better elsewhere.

CHAPTER V

In Which Jimmie Grimm Moves to Ruddy Cove and Settles on the Slope of the Broken Nose, Where, Falling in With Billy Topsail and Donald North, He Finds the Latter a Coward, But Learns the Reason, and Scoffs no Longer. In Which, Also, Donald North Leaps a Breaker to Save a Salmon Net, and Acquires a Strut

WHEN old Jim Grimm moved to Ruddy Cove and settled his wife and son in a little white cottage on the slope of a bare hill called Broken Nose, Jimmie Grimm was not at all sorry. There were other boys at Ruddy Cove—far more boys, and jollier boys, and boys with more time to spare, than at Buccaneer. There was Billy Topsail, for one, a tow-headed, blue-eyed, active lad of Jimmie's age; and there was Donald North, for another. Jimmie Grimm liked them both. Billy Topsail was the elder, and up to more agreeable tricks; but Donald was good enough company for anybody, and would have been quite as admirable as Billy Topsail had it not been that he was afraid of the sea. They did not call him a coward at Ruddy

Cove; they merely said that he was afraid of the sea.

And Donald North was.

Jimmie Grimm, himself no coward in a blow of wind, was inclined to scoff, at first; but Billy Topsail explained, and then Jimmie Grimm scoffed no longer, but hoped that Donald North would be cured of fear before he was much older. As Billy Topsail made plain to the boy, in excuse of his friend, Donald North was brave enough until he was eight years old; but after the accident of that season he was so timid that he shrank from the edge of the cliff when the breakers were beating the rocks below, and trembled when his father's fishing punt heeled to the faintest gust.

"Billy," he had said to Billy Topsail, on the unfortunate day when he caught the fear, being then but a little chap, "leave us go sail my new fore-an'-after. I've rigged her out with a fine new mizzens'l."

"Sure, b'y!" said Billy. "Where to?"

"Uncle George's wharf-head. 'Tis a place as good as any."

Off Uncle George's wharf-head the water was

deep—deeper than Donald could fathom at low tide—and it was cold, and covered a rocky bottom, upon which a multitude of starfish and prickly sea-eggs lay in clusters. It was green, smooth and clear, too; sight carried straight down to where the purple-shelled mussels gripped the rocks.

The tide had fallen somewhat and was still on the ebb. Donald found it a long reach from the wharf to the water. By and by, as the water ran out of the harbour, the most he could do was to touch the tip of the mast of the miniature ship with his fingers. Then a little gust of wind crept round the corner of the wharf, rippling the water as it came near. It caught the sails of the new fore-and-after, and the little craft fell over on another tack and shot away.

"Here, you!" Donald cried. "Come back, will you?"

He reached for the mast. His fingers touched it, but the boat escaped before they closed. He laughed, hitched nearer to the edge of the wharf, and reached again. The wind had failed; the little boat was tossing in the ripples, below and just beyond his grasp.

"I can't cotch her!" he called to Billy Top-

sail, who was back near the net-horse, looking for squids.

Billy looked up, and laughed to see Donald's awkward position—to see him hanging over the water, red-faced and straining. Donald laughed, too. At once he lost his balance and fell forward.

This was in the days before he could swim, so he floundered about in the water, beating it wildly, to bring himself to the surface. When he came up, Billy Topsail was leaning over to catch him. Donald lifted his arm. His fingers touched Billy's, that was all—just touched them.

Then he sank; and when he came up again, and again lifted his arm, there was half a foot of space between his hand and Billy's. Some measure of self-possession returned. He took a long breath, and let himself sink. Down he went, weighted by his heavy boots.

Those moments were full of the terror of which, later, he could not rid himself. There seemed to be no end to the depth of the water in that place. But when his feet touched bottom, he was still deliberate in all that he did.

For a moment he let them rest on the rock. Then he gave himself a strong upward push.

It needed but little to bring him within reach of Billy Topsail's hand. He shot out of the water and caught that hand. Soon afterwards he was safe on the wharf.[1]

"Sure, mum, I thought I were drownded that time!" he said to his mother, that night. "When I were goin' down the last time I thought I'd never see you again."

"But you wasn't drownded, b'y," said his mother, softly.

"But I might ha' been," said he.

There was the rub. He was haunted by what might have happened. Soon he became a timid, shrinking lad, utterly lacking confidence in the strength of his arms and his skill with an oar and a sail; and after that came to pass, his life was hard. He was afraid to go out to the fishing-grounds, where he must go every day with his father to keep the head of the punt up to the wind, and he had a great fear of the wind and the fog and the breakers. But he was not a coward. On the contrary, although he was circumspect in all his dealings with the sea, he never failed in his duty.

[1] Donald North himself told me this—told me, too, what he had thought, and what he said to his mother.—N. D.

In Ruddy Cove all the men put out their salmon nets when the ice breaks up and drifts away southward, for the spring run of salmon then begins. These nets are laid in the sea, at right angles to the rocks and extending out from them; they are set alongshore, it may be a mile or two, from the narrow passage to the harbour. The outer end is buoyed and anchored, and the other is lashed to an iron stake which is driven deep into some crevice of the rock.

When belated icebergs hang offshore a watch must be kept on the nets, lest they be torn away or ground to pulp by the ice.

"The wind's haulin' round a bit, b'y," said Donald's father, one day in spring, when the lad was twelve years old, and he was in the company of Jimmie Grimm and Billy Topsail on the sunny slope of the Broken Nose. "I think 'twill freshen and blow inshore afore night."

"They's a scattered pan of ice out there, father," said Donald, "and three small bergs."

"Yes, b'y, I knows," said North. "'Tis that I'm afeared of. If the wind changes a bit more, 'twill jam the ice agin the rocks. Does you think the net is safe?"

Jimmie Grimm glanced at Billy Topsail; and Billy Topsail glanced at Jimmie Grimm.

"Wh-wh-what, sir?" Donald stammered.

It was quite evident that the net was in danger, but since Donald had first shown sign of fearing the sea, Job North had not compelled him to go out upon perilous undertakings. He had fallen into the habit of leaving the boy to choose his own course, believing that in time he would master himself.

"I says," he repeated, quietly, "does you think that net's in danger?"

Billy Topsail nudged Jimmie Grimm. They walked off together. It would never do to witness a display of Donald's cowardice.

"He'll not go," Jimmie Grimm declared.

"'Tis not so sure," said Billy.

"I tell you," Jimmie repeated, confidently, "that he'll never go out t' save that net. Hut!" he added; "he'll have no heart for the leap."

"I think he'll go," Billy insisted.

In the meantime Job North had stood regarding his son.

"Well, son," he sighed, "what you think about that net?"

"I think, sir," said Donald, steadily, between his teeth, "that the net should come in."

Job North patted the boy on the back. "'Twould be wise, b'y," said he, smiling. "Come, b'y; we'll go fetch it."

"So long, Don!" Billy Topsail shouted delightedly.

Donald and his father put out in the punt. There was a fair, fresh wind, and with this filling the little brown sail, they were soon driven out from the quiet water of the harbour to the heaving sea itself. Great swells rolled in from the open and broke furiously against the coast rocks. The punt ran alongshore for two miles, keeping well away from the breakers. When at last she came to that point where Job North's net was set, Donald furled the sail and his father took up the oars.

"'Twill be a bit hard to land," he said.

Therein lay the danger. There is no beach along that coast. The rocks rise abruptly from the sea—here, sheer and towering; there, low and broken. When there is a sea running, the swells roll in and break against these rocks; and when the breakers catch a punt, they are certain to smash it to splinters.

The iron stake to which Job North's net was lashed was fixed in a low ledge, upon which some hardy shrubs had taken root. The waves were casting themselves against the rocks below, breaking with a great roar and flinging spray over the ledge.

"'Twill be a bit hard," North said again.

But the salmon-fishers have a way of landing under such conditions. When their nets are in danger they do not hesitate. The man at the oars lets the boat drift with the breaker stern foremost towards the rocks. His mate leaps from the stern seat to the ledge. Then the other pulls the boat out of danger before the wave curls and breaks. It is the only way.

But sometimes the man in the stern miscalculates—leaps too soon, stumbles, leaps short. He falls back, and is almost inevitably drowned. Sometimes, too, the current of the wave is too strong for the man at the oars; his punt is swept in, pull as hard as he may, and he is overwhelmed with her. Donald knew all this. He had lived in dread of the time when he must first make that leap.

"The ice is comin' in, b'y," said North. "'Twill scrape these here rocks, certain sure.

Does you think you're strong enough to take the oars an' let me go ashore?"

"No, sir," said Donald.

"You never leaped afore, did you?"

"No, sir."

"Will you try it now, b'y?" said North, quietly.

"Yes, sir," Donald said, faintly.

"Get ready, then," said North.

With a stroke or two of the oars Job swung the stern of the boat to the rocks. He kept her hanging in this position until the water fell back and gathered in a new wave; then he lifted his oars. Donald was crouched on the stern seat, waiting for the moment to rise and spring.

The boat moved in, running on the crest of the wave which would a moment later break against the rock. Donald stood up, and fixed his eye on the ledge. He was afraid; all the strength and courage he possessed seemed to desert him. The punt was now almost on a level with the ledge. The wave was about to curl and fall. It was the precise moment when he must leap—that instant, too, when the punt must be pulled out of the grip of the breaker, if at all.

Billy Topsail and Jimmie Grimm were at this

Courtesy of "The Youth's Companion"

LUCKING UP HIS COURAGE, DONALD LEAPED FOR THE ROCK.

critical moment hanging off Grief Island, in the lee, whence they could see all that occurred. They had come out to watch the issue of Donald's courage.

"He'll never leap," Jimmie exclaimed.

"He will," said Billy.

"He'll not," Jimmie declared.

"Look!" cried Billy.

Donald felt of a sudden that he *must* do this thing. Therefore why not do it courageously? He leaped; but this new courage had not come in time. He made the ledge, but he fell an inch short of a firm footing. So for a moment he tottered, between falling forward and falling back. Then he caught the branch of an overhanging shrub, and with this saved himself. When he turned, Job had the punt in safety; but he was breathing hard, as if the strain had been great.

"'Twas not so hard, was it, b'y?" said Job.

"No, sir," said Donald.

"I told you so," said Billy Topsail to Jimmie Grimm.

"Good b'y!" Jimmie declared, as he hoisted the sail for the homeward run.

Donald cast the net line loose from its mooring, and saw that it was all clear. His father let

the punt sweep in again. It is much easier to leap from a solid rock than from a boat, so Donald jumped in without difficulty. Then they rowed out to the buoy and hauled the great, dripping net over the side.

It was well they had gone out, for before morning the ice had drifted over the place where the net had been. More than that, Donald North profited by his experience. He perceived that if perils must be encountered, they are best met with a clear head and an unflinching heart.

"Wisht you'd been out t' see me jump the day," he said to Jimmie Grimm, that night.

Billy and Jimmie laughed.

"Wisht you had," Donald repeated.

"We was," said Jimmie.

Donald threw back his head, puffed out his chest, dug his hands in his pockets and strutted off. It was the first time, poor lad! he had ever won the right to swagger in the presence of Jimmie Grimm and Billy Topsail. To be sure, he made the most of it!

But he was not yet cured.

CHAPTER VI

In Which, Much to the Delight of Jimmie Grimm and Billy Topsail, Donald North, Having Perilous Business On a Pan of Ice After Night, is Cured of Fear, and Once More Puffs Out His Chest and Struts Like a Rooster

LIKE many another snug little harbour on the northeast coast of Newfoundland, Ruddy Cove is confronted by the sea and flanked by a vast wilderness; so all the folk take their living from the sea, as their forebears have done for generations. In the gales and high seas of the summer following, and in the blinding snow-storms and bitter cold of the winter, Donald North grew in fine readiness to face peril at the call of duty. All that he had gained was put to the test in the next spring, when the floating ice, which drifts out of the north in the spring break-up, was driven by the wind against the coast.

After that adventure, Jimmie Grimm said:

"You're all right, Don!"

And Billy Topsail said:

"You're all right, Don!"

Donald North, himself, stuck his hands in his pockets, threw out his chest, spat like a skipper and strutted like a rooster.

"I 'low I *is!*" said he.

And he was. And nobody decried his little way of boasting, which lasted only for a day; and everybody was glad that at last he was like other boys.

Job North, with Alexander Bludd and Bill Stevens, went out on the ice to hunt seal. The hunt led them ten miles offshore. In the afternoon of that day the wind gave some sign of changing to the west, and at dusk it was blowing half a gale offshore. When the wind blows offshore it sweeps all this wandering ice out to sea, and disperses the whole pack.

"Go see if your father's comin', b'y," said Donald's mother. "I'm gettin' terrible nervous about the ice."

Donald took his gaff—a long pole of the light, tough dogwood, two inches thick and shod with iron—and set out. It was growing dark. The wind, rising still, was blowing in strong, cold gusts. It began to snow while he was yet on the ice of the harbour, half a mile away

from the pans and clumpers which the wind of the day before had crowded against the coast.

When he came to the "standing edge"—the stationary rim of ice which is frozen to the coast—the wind was thickly charged with snow. What with dusk and snow, he found it hard to keep to the right way. But he was not afraid for himself; his only fear was that the wind would sweep the ice-pack out to sea before his father reached the standing edge. In that event, as he knew, Job North would be doomed.

Donald went out on the standing edge. Beyond lay a widening gap of water. The pack had already begun to move out.

There was no sign of Job North's party. The lad ran up and down, hallooing as he ran; but for a time there was no answer to his call. Then it seemed to him that he heard a despairing hail, sounding far to the right, whence he had come. Night had almost fallen, and the snow added to its depth; but as he ran back Donald could still see across the gap of water to the great pan of ice, which, of all the pack, was nearest to the standing edge. He perceived that the gap had considerably widened since he had first observed it.

"Is that you, father?" he called.

"Ay, Donald," came an answering hail from directly opposite. "Is there a small pan of ice on your side?"

Donald searched up and down the standing edge for a detached cake large enough for his purpose. Near at hand he came upon a small, thin pan, not more than six feet square.

"Haste, b'y!" cried his father.

"They's one here," he called back, "but 'tis too small. Is there none there?"

"No, b'y. Fetch that over."

Here was desperate need. If the lad were to meet it, he must act instantly and fearlessly. He stepped out on the pan and pushed off with his gaff. Using his gaff as a paddle—as these gaffs are constantly used in ferrying by the Newfoundland fishermen—and helped by the wind, he soon ferried himself to where Job North stood waiting with his companions.

"'Tis too small," said Stevens. "'Twill not hold two."

North looked dubiously at the pan. Alexander Bludd shook his head in despair.

"Get back while you can, b'y," said North. "Quick! We're driftin' fast! The pan's too small."

"I thinks 'tis big enough for one man an' me," said Donald.

"Get aboard an' try it, Alexander," said Job. "Quick, man!"

Alexander Bludd stepped on. The pan tipped fearfully, and the water ran over it; but when the weight of the man and the boy was properly adjusted, it seemed capable of bearing them both across. They pushed off, and seemed to go well enough; but when Alexander moved to put his gaff in the water the pan tipped again. Donald came near losing his footing. He moved nearer the edge and the pan came to a level. They paddled with all their strength, for the wind was blowing against them, and there was need of haste if three passages were to be made. Meantime the gap had grown so wide that the wind had turned the ripples into waves, which washed over the pan as high as Donald's ankles.

But they came safely across. Bludd stepped swiftly ashore, and Donald pushed off. With the wind in his favour he was soon once more at the other side.

"Now, Bill," said North; "your turn next."

"I can't do it, Job," said Stevens. "Get aboard yourself. The lad can't come back again.

We're driftin' out too fast. He's your lad, an' you've the right to ——"

"Ay, I can come back," said Donald. "Come on, Bill! Be quick!"

Stevens was a lighter man than Alexander Bludd; but the passage was wider, and still widening, for the pack had gathered speed. When Stevens was safely landed he looked back. A vast white shadow was all that he could see. Job North's figure had been merged with the night.

"Donald, b'y," he said, "you got t' go back for your father, but I'm fair feared you'll never ——"

"Give me a push, Bill," said Donald.

Stevens caught the end of the gaff and pushed the lad out.

"Good-bye, Donald," he called.

When the pan touched the other side Job North stepped aboard without a word. He was a heavy man. With his great body on the ice-cake, the difficulty of return was enormously increased, as Donald had foreseen. The pan was overweighted. Time and again it nearly shook itself free of its load and rose to the surface. North was near the centre, plying his gaff with

difficulty, but Donald was on the extreme edge. Moreover, the distance was twice as great as it had been at first, and the waves were running high, and it was dark.

They made way slowly. The pan often wavered beneath them; but Donald was intent upon the thing he was doing, and he was not afraid. Then came the time—they were but ten yards off the standing edge—when North struck his gaff too deep into the water. He lost his balance, struggled to regain it, failed—and fell off. Before Donald was awake to the danger, the edge of the pan sank under him, and he, too, toppled off.

Donald had learned to swim now. When he came to the surface, his father was breast-high in the water, looking for him.

"Are you all right, Donald?" said his father.

"Yes, sir."

"Can you reach the ice alone?"

"Yes, sir," said Donald, quietly.

Alexander Bludd and Bill Stevens helped them up on the standing edge, and they were home by the kitchen fire in half an hour.

"'Twas bravely done, b'y," said Job.

So Donald North learned that perils feared

are much more terrible than perils faced. He had a courage of the finest kind, in the following days of adventure, now close upon him, had young Donald.

CHAPTER VII

In Which Bagg, Imported From the Gutters of London, Lands At Ruddy Cove From the Mail-Boat, Makes the Acquaintance of Jimmie Grimm and Billy Topsail, and Tells Them 'E Wants to Go 'Ome. In Which, Also, the Way to Catastrophe Is Pointed

THE mail-boat comes to Ruddy Cove in the night, when the shadows are black and wet, and the wind, blowing in from the sea, is charged with a clammy mist. The lights in the cottages are blurred by the fog. They form a broken line of yellow splotches rounding the harbour's edge. Beyond is deep night and a wilderness into which the wind drives. In the morning the fog still clings to the coast. Within the cloudy wall it is all glum and dripping wet. When a veering wind sweeps the fog away, there lies disclosed a world of rock and forest and fuming sea, stretching from the end of the earth to the summits of the inland hills—a place of ruggedness and hazy distances ; of silence and a vast, forbidding loneliness.

It was on such a morning that Bagg, the London gutter-snipe, having been landed at Ruddy Cove from the mail-boat the night before —this being in the fall before Donald North played ferryman between the standing edge and the floe—it was on such a foggy morning, I say, that Bagg made the acquaintance of Billy Topsail and Jimmie Grimm.

"Hello!" said Billy Topsail.

"Hello!" Jimmie Grimm echoed.

"You blokes live 'ere?" Bagg whined.

"Uh-huh," said Billy Topsail.

"This yer '*ome?*" pursued Bagg.

Billy nodded.

"Wisht *I* was 'ome!" sighed Bagg. "I say," he added, "which way's 'ome from 'ere?"

"You mean Skipper 'Zekiel's cottage?"

"I mean Lun'on," said Bagg.

"Don't know," Billy answered. "You better ask Uncle Tommy Luff. He'll tell you."

Bagg had been exported for adoption. The gutters of London are never exhausted of their product of malformed little bodies and souls; they provide waifs for the remotest colonies of the empire. So, as it chanced, Bagg had been exported to Newfoundland—transported from his

native alleys to this vast and lonely place. Bagg was scrawny and sallow, with bandy legs and watery eyes and a fantastic cranium; and he had a snub nose, which turned blue when a cold wind struck it. But when he was landed from the mail-boat he found a warm welcome, just the same, from Ruth Rideout, Ezekiel's wife, by whom he had been taken for adoption.

Later in the day, old Uncle Tommy Luff, just in from the fishing grounds off the Mull, where he had been jigging for stray cod all day long, had moored his punt to the stage-head, and he was now coming up the path with his sail over his shoulder, his back to the wide, flaring sunset. Bagg sat at the turn to Squid Cove, disconsolate. The sky was heavy with glowing clouds, and the whole earth was filled with a glory such as he had not known before.

"Shall I arst the ol' beggar when 'e gets 'ere?" mused Bagg.

Uncle Tommy looked up with a smile.

"I say, mister," piped Bagg, when the old man came abreast, "which way's 'ome from 'ere?"

"Eh, b'y?" said Uncle Tommy.

"'Ome, sir. Which way is 'ome from 'ere?"

In that one word Bagg's sickness of heart expressed itself—in the quivering, wistful accent.

"Is you 'Zekiel Rideout's lad?" said Uncle Tommy.

"Don't yer make no mistake, mister," said Bagg, somewhat resentfully. "I ain't nothink t' nobody."

"I knowed you was that lad," Uncle Tommy drawled, "when I seed the size o' you. Sure, b'y, you knows so well as me where 'Zekiel's place is to. 'Tis t' the head o' Burnt Cove, there, with the white railin', an' the tater patch aft o' the place where they spreads the fish. Sure, you knows the way home."

"I mean Lun'on, mister," Bagg urged.

"Oh, home!" said Uncle Tommy. "When I was a lad like you, b'y, just here from the West Country, me fawther told me if I steered a course out o' the tickle an' kept me starn fair for the meetin'-house, I'd sure get home t' last."

"Which way, mister?"

Uncle Tommy pointed out to sea—to that far place in the east where the dusk was creeping up over the horizon.

"There, b'y," said he. "Home lies there."

Then Uncle Tommy shifted his sail to the other shoulder and trudged on up the hill; and Bagg threw himself on the ground and wept until his sobs convulsed his scrawny little body.

"I want to go 'ome!" he sobbed. "I want to go 'ome!"

No wonder that Bagg, London born and bred, wanted to go home to the crowd and roar and glitter of the streets to which he had been used. It was fall in Ruddy Cove, when the winds are variable and gusty, when the sea is breaking under the sweep of a freshening breeze and yet heaving to the force of spent gales. Fogs, persistently returning with the east wind, filled the days with gloom and dampness. Great breakers beat against the harbour rocks; the swish and thud of them never ceased, nor was there any escape from it.

Bagg went to the fishing grounds with Ezekiel Rideout, where he jigged for the fall run of cod; and there he was tossed about in the lop, and chilled to the marrow by the nor'easters. Many a time the punt ran heeling and plunging for the shelter of the harbour, with the spray falling upon Bagg where he cowered amidships; and

once she was nearly undone by an offshore gale. In the end Bagg learned consideration for the whims of a punt and acquired an unfathomable respect for a gust and a breaking wave.

Thus the fall passed, when the catching and splitting and drying of fish was a distraction. Then came the winter—short, drear days, mere breaks in the night, when there was no relief from the silence and vasty space round about, and the dark was filled with the terrors of snow and great winds and loneliness. At last the spring arrived, when the ice drifted out of the north in vast floes, bearing herds of hair-seal within reach of the gaffs of the harbour folk, and was carried hither and thither with the wind.

Then there came a day when the wind gathered the clumpers and pans in one broad mass and jammed it against the coast. The sea, where it had lain black and fretful all winter long, was now covered and hidden. The ice stretched unbroken from the rocks of Ruddy Cove to the limit of vision in the east. And Bagg marvelled. There seemed to be a solid path from Ruddy Cove straight away in the direction in which Uncle Tommy Luff had said that England lay.

Notwithstanding the comfort and plenty of

his place with Aunt Ruth Rideout and Uncle Ezekiel, Bagg still longed to go back to the gutters of London.

"I want to go 'ome," he often said to Billy Topsail and Jimmie Grimm.

"What for?" Billy once demanded.

"Don't know," Bagg replied. "I jus' want to go 'ome."

At last Bagg formed a plan.

CHAPTER VIII

In Which Bagg, Unknown to Ruddy Cove, Starts for Home, and, After Some Difficulty, Safely Gets There

UNCLE TOMMY LUFF, coming up the hill one day when the ice was jammed against the coast and covered the sea as far as sight carried, was stopped by Bagg at the turn to Squid Cove.

"I say, mister," said Bagg, "which way was you tellin' me Lun'on was from 'ere?"

Uncle Tommy pointed straight out to the ice-covered sea.

"That way?" asked Bagg.

"Straight out o' the tickle with the meetin'-house astarn."

"Think a bloke could ever get there?" Bagg inquired.

Uncle Tommy laughed. "If he kep' on walkin' he'd strike it some time," he answered.

"Sure?" Bagg demanded.

"If he kep' on walkin'," Uncle Tommy repeated, smiling.

This much may be said of the ice: the wind which carries it inshore inevitably sweeps it out to sea again, in an hour or a day or a week, as it may chance. The whole pack—the wide expanse of enormous fragments of fields and glaciers—is in the grip of the wind, which, as all men know, bloweth where it listeth. A nor'east gale sets it grinding against the coast, but when the wind veers to the west the pack moves out and scatters.

If a man is caught in that great rush and heaving, he has nothing further to do with his own fate but wait. He escapes if he has strength to survive until the wind blows the ice against the coast again—not else. When the Newfoundlander starts out to the seal hunt he makes sure, in so far as he can, that no change in the wind is threatened.

Uncle Ezekiel Rideout kept an eye on the weather that night.

"Be you goin', b'y?" said Ruth, looking up from her weaving.

Ezekiel had just come in from Lookout Head, where the watchers had caught sight of the seals, swarming far off in the shadows.

"They's seals out there," he said, "but I

don't know as us'll go the night. 'Tis like the wind 'll haul t' the west."

"What do Uncle Tommy Luff say?"

"That 'twill haul t' the west an' freshen afore midnight."

"Sure, then, you'll not be goin', b'y?"

"I don't know as anybody'll go," said he. "Looks a bit too nasty for 'em."

Nevertheless, Ezekiel put some pork and hard-bread in his dunny bag, and made ready his gaff and tow-lines, lest, by chance, the weather should promise fair at midnight.

"Where's that young scamp?" said Ezekiel, with a smile—a smile which expressed a fine, indulgent affection.

"Now, I wonder where he is?" said Ruth, pausing in her work. "He've been gone more'n an hour, sure."

"Leave un bide where he is so long as he likes," said he. "Sure he must be havin' a bit o' sport. 'Twill do un good."

Ezekiel sat down by the fire and dozed. From time to time he went to the door to watch the weather. From time to time Aunt Ruth listened for the footfalls of Bagg coming up the path. After a long time she put her work away.

The moon was shining through a mist; so she sat at the window, for from there she could see the boy when he rounded the turn to the path. She wished he would come home.

"I'll go down t' Topsail's t' see what's t' be done about the seals," said Ezekiel.

"Keep a lookout for the b'y," said she.

Ezekiel was back in half an hour. "Topsail's gone t' bed," said he. "Sure, no one's goin' out the night. The wind's hauled round t' the west, an' 'twill blow a gale afore mornin'. The ice is movin' out slow a'ready. Be that lad out yet?"

"Yes, b'y," said Ruth, anxiously. "I wisht he'd come home."

"I—I—wisht he would," said Ezekiel.

Ruth went to the door and called Bagg by name.

But there was no answer.

Offshore, four miles offshore, Bagg was footing it for England as fast as his skinny little legs would carry him. The way was hard—a winding, uneven path over the pack. It led round clumpers, over ridges which were hard to scale, and across broad, slippery pans. The frost had

glued every fragment to its neighbour; for the moment the pack formed one solid mass, continuous and at rest, but the connection between its parts was of the slenderest, needing only a change of the wind or the ground swell of the sea to break it everywhere.

The moon was up. It was half obscured by a haze which was driving out from the shore, to which quarter the wind had now fairly veered. The wind was rising—coming in gusts, in which, soon, flakes of snow appeared. But there was light enough to keep to the general direction out from the coast, and the wind but helped Bagg along.

"I got t' 'urry up," thought he.

The boy looked behind. Ruddy Cove was within sight. He was surprised that the coast was still so near.

"Got t' 'urry up a bit more," he determined.

He was elated—highly elated. He thought that his old home was but a night's journey distant; at most, not more than a night and a day, and he had more than food enough in his pockets to last through that. He was elated; but from time to time a certain regret entered in, and it was not easily cast out. He remembered

the touch of Aunt Ruth's lips, and her arm, which had often stolen about him in the dusk; and he remembered that Uncle Ezekiel had beamed upon him most affectionately, in times of mischief and good works alike. He had been well loved in Ruddy Cove.

"Wisht I'd told Aunt Ruth," Bagg thought.

On he trudged—straight out to sea.

"Got t' 'urry up," thought he.

Again the affection of Aunt Ruth occurred to him. She had been very kind; and as for Uncle 'Zeke—why, nobody could have been kinder.

"Wisht I *'ad* told Aunt Ruth," Bagg regretted. "Might o' said good-bye anyhow."

The ice was now drifting out; but the wind had not yet risen to that measure of strength wherewith it tears the pack to pieces, nor had the sea attacked it. There was a gap of two hundred yards between the coast rocks and the edge of the ice, but that was far, far back, and hidden from sight. The pack was drifting slowly, smoothly, still in one compact mass. Its motion was not felt by Bagg, who pressed steadily on toward England, eager again, but fast growing weary.

"Got t' 'urry up," thought he.

But presently he must rest; and while he rested the wind gathered strength. It went singing over the pack, pressing ever with a stronger hand upon its clumpers and ridges—pushing it, everywhere, faster and faster out to sea. The pack was on the point of breaking in pieces under the strain, but the wind still fell short of the power to rend it. There was a greater volume of snow falling; it was driven past in thin, swirling clouds. Hence the light of the moon began to fail. Far away, at the rim of the pack, the sea was eating its way in, but the swish and crash of its work was too far distant to be heard.

"I ain't nothink t' nobody but Aunt Ruth," Bagg thought, as he rose to continue the tramp.

On he went, the wind lending him wings; but at last his legs gave out at the knees, and he sat down again to rest. This was in the *lee* of a clumper, where he was comfortably sheltered. He was still warm—in a glow of heat, indeed—and his hope was still with him. So far he had suffered from nothing save weariness. So he began to dream of what he would do when he got home, just as all men do when they come near, once again, to that old place where they were born. The wind was now

a gale, blowing furiously; the pack was groaning in its outlying parts.

"Nothink t' nobody," Bagg grumbled, on his way once more.

Then he stopped dead—in terror. He had heard the breaking of an ice-pan—a great clap and rumble, vanishing in the distance. The noise was repeated, all roundabout—bursting from everywhere, rising to a fearful volume: near at hand, a cracking; far off, a continuing roar. The pack was breaking up. Each separate part was torn from another, and the noise of the rending was great. Each part ground against its neighbour on every side. The weaker pans were crushed like egg-shells. Then the whole began to feel the heave of the sea.

"It's a earthquake!" thought Bagg. "I better 'urry up."

He looked back over the way he had come—searching the shadows for Ruddy Cove. But the coast was lost to sight.

"Must be near acrost, now," he thought. "I'll 'urry up."

So he turned his back on Ruddy Cove and ran straight out to sea, for he thought that Eng-

land was nearer than the coast he had left. He was now upon a pan, both broad and thick—stout enough to withstand the pressure of the pack. It was a wide field of ice, which the cold of the far North, acting through many years, it may be, had made strong. Elsewhere the pans were breaking—were lifting themselves out of the press and falling back in pieces—were being ground to finest fragments. This mighty confusion of noise and wind and snow and night, and the upheaval of the whole world roundabout, made the soul of Bagg shiver within him. It surpassed the terrors of his dreams.

"Guess I never *will* get 'ome," thought he.

Soon he came to the edge of the pan. Beyond, where the pack was in smaller blocks, the sea was swelling beneath it. The ice was all heaving and swaying. He dared not venture out upon this shifting ground. So he ran up and down, seeking a path onward; but he discovered none. Meantime, the parts of the pack had fallen into easier positions; the noise of crunching, as the one ground against the other, had somewhat abated. The ice continued its course outward, under the driving force of the wind. but the pressure was relieved. The pans

fell away from one another. Lakes and lanes of water opened up. The pan upon which Bagg chanced to find himself in the great break-up soon floated free. There was now no escape from it.

Bagg retreated from the edge, for the seas began to break there.

"Wisht I was 'ome again," he sobbed.

This time he did not look towards England, but wistfully back to Ruddy Cove.

The gale wasted away in the night. The next day was warm and sunny on all that coast. An ice-pack hung offshore from Fortune Harbour. In the afternoon it began to creep in with a light wind. The first pans struck the coast at dusk. The folk of the place were on the Head, on the lookout for the sign of a herd of seal. Just before night fell they spied a black speck, as far out from shore as their eyes could see.

"They'll be seals out there the morrow," the men were all agreed.

So they went home and prepared to set out at dawn of the next day. In the night, the wind swept the whole pack in, to the last lagging pan. The ice was all jammed against the coast—a firm,

vast expanse, stretching to the horizon, and held in place by the wind, which continued strong and steady. The men of Fortune Harbour went confidently out to the hunt. At noon, when they were ten miles off the shore, they perceived the approach of a small, black figure.

The meeting came soon afterwards, for the folk of Fortune Harbour, being both curious and quick to respond to need, made haste.

"I say, mister," said Bagg, briskly, addressing old John Forsyth, "yer 'aven't got no 'am, 'ave yer?"

The men of Fortune Harbour laughed.

"Or nothink else, 'ave yer?" Bagg continued, hopefully. "I'm a bit 'ungry."

"Sure, b'y," said Forsyth. "I've a biscuit an' a bit o' pork."

"'Ave yer, now?" said Bagg. "Would yer mind giv——"

But his hands were already full. A moment later his mouth was in the same condition.

"How'd you come out here?" said Forsyth.

"Swep' out," said Bagg. "I say, mister," he added, between munches, "which way would yer say my 'ome was from 'ere?"

"Where's your home?"

"Ruddy Cove," said Bagg.

"'Tis fifteen mile up the coast."

"'Ow would you get there quickest if yer 'ad to?"

"We'll take care o' you, b'y," said Forsyth. "We'll put you t' Ruddy Cove in a skiff, when the ice goes out. Seems t' me," he added, "you must be the boy Ezekiel Rideout took. Isn't you Ezekiel Rideout's boy?"

"Bet yer life I am," said Bagg.

CHAPTER IX

In Which Jimmie Grimm and Billy Topsail, Being Added Up and Called a Man, Are Shipped For St. John's, With Bill o' Burnt Bay, Where They Fall In With Archie Armstrong, Sir Archibald's Son, and Bill o' Burnt Bay Declines to Insure the "First Venture"

OF course, Donald North, who had been ferryman to his father, had no foolishly romantic idea of his experience on that pan of ice; nor had Jimmie Grimm, nor had Billy Topsail. Donald North would not have called it an adventure, nor himself a hero; he would have said, without any affectation of modesty, "Oh, that was jus' a little mess!" The thing had come in the course of the day's work: that was all. Something had depended upon him, and, greatly to his elation, he had "made good." It was no more to him than a hard tackle to a boy of the American towns. Any sound American boy—any boy of healthy courage and clean heart—would doubtless have taken Job North off the drifting floe; and Donald North, for his part, would no doubt have made

the tackle and saved the goal—though frightened to a greenish pallor—had he ever been face to face with the necessity. Had he ever survived a football game, he would have thought himself a hero, and perhaps have boasted more than was pleasant; but to have taken a larger chance with his life on a pan of ice was so small and usual a thing as presently to be forgotten.

Newfoundland boys are used to that.

It was still spring at Ruddy Cove—two weeks or more after Bagg came back to his real home—when Donald North's friends, Billy Topsail and Jimmie Grimm, fell into considerable peril in a gale of wind off the Chunks. Even they—used to such adventures as they were—called it a narrow escape.

"No more o' that for *me*," said Billy Topsail, afterwards.

"Nor me," said Jimmie Grimm.

"You'll both o' you take all that comes your way," Bill o' Burnt Bay put in, tartly.

It was aboard the *First Venture*, which Bill o' Burnt Bay had as master-builder built at Ruddy Cove for himself. She was to be his—she *was* his—and he loved her from stem to

stern. And she was his because Sir Archibald Armstrong, the great St. John's merchant and ship-owner, had advanced the money to build her in recognition of Skipper Bill's courageous rescue of Archie Armstrong, Sir Archibald's only son, in a great blizzard, on the sealing voyage of the year before.[1] At any rate, the *First Venture* was Bill's; and she was now afloat and finished, rigged to the last strand of rope. To say that Skipper Bill was proud of her does not begin to express the way in which he loved her.

"Now, look you, Billy Topsail, and you, too, Jimmie Grimm!" said he, gravely, one day, beckoning the boys near.

The *First Venture* was lying at anchor in the harbour, ready for her maiden voyage to St. John's.

"I'm in need of a man aboard this here craft," Bill o' Burnt Bay went on; "an' as there's none t' be had in this harbour I'm thinkin' of addin' you two boys up an' callin' the answer t' the sum a man."

"Wisht you would, Skipper Bill," said Jimmie.

[1] The story of this voyage—the tale of the time when Archie Armstrong and Billy Topsail and Bill o' Burnt Bay were lost in the snow on the ice-floe—with certain other happenings in which Billy Topsail was involved—is related in "The Adventures of Billy Topsail."

"Two halves makes a whole," Bill mused, scratching his head in doubt. "Leastwise, so I was teached."

"They teach it in school," said Jimmie.

Billy Topsail grinned delightedly.

"Well," Bill declared, at last, "I'll take you, no matter what comes of it, for there's nothing else I can do."

It wasn't quite complimentary; but the boys didn't mind.

When the *First Venture* made St. John's it was still early enough in the spring of the year for small craft to be at sea. When she was ready to depart on the return voyage to Ruddy Cove, the days were days of changeable weather, of wind and snow, of fog and rain, of unseasonable intervals of quiet sunshine. The predictions of the wiseacres were not to be trusted; and, at any rate, every forecast was made with a wag of the head that implied a large mental reservation. At sea it was better to proceed with caution. To be prepared for emergencies—to expect the worst and to be ready for it—was the part of plain common sense. And Skipper Bill o' Burnt Bay was well aware of this.

The *First Venture* lay in dock at St. John's. She was loaded for Ruddy Cove and the ports beyond. Skipper Bill had launched himself as a coastwise skipper—master of the stout *First Venture*, carrying freight to the northern settlements at a fair rate for all comers. The hold was full to the deck; and the deck itself was cumbered with casks and cases, all lashed fast in anticipation of a rough voyage. It was a miscellaneous cargo: flour, beef, powder and shot, molasses, kerosene, clothing—such necessities, in short, as the various merchants to whom the cargo was consigned could dispose of to the people of the coast, and such simple comforts as the people could afford.

She was a trim and stout little fore-and-aft schooner of fifty tons burthen. The viewers had awarded the government bounty without a quibble. Old John Hulton, the chief of them—a terror to the slipshod master-builders—had frankly said that she was an honest little craft from bowsprit to taffrail. The newspapers had complimented Bill o' Burnt Bay, her builder, in black and white which could not be disputed. They had even called Skipper Bill "one of the honest master-builders of the outports." Nor

had they forgotten to add the hope that "in the hands of Skipper William, builder and master, the new craft will have many and prosperous voyages." By this praise, of course, Skipper Bill was made to glow from head to foot with happy gratification.

All the *First Venture* wanted was a fair wind out.

"She can leg it, sir," Skipper Bill said to Sir Archibald, running his eyes over the tall, trim spars of the new craft; "an' once she gets t' sea she's got ballast enough t' stand up to a sousing breeze. With any sort o' civil weather she ought t' make Ruddy Cove in five days."

"I'd not drive her too hard," said Sir Archibald, who had come down to look at the new schooner for a purpose.

Bill o' Burnt Bay looked up in amazement. This from the hard-sailing Sir Archibald!

"Not too hard," Sir Archibald repeated.

Skipper Bill laughed.

"I'm sure," said Sir Archibald, "that Mrs. William had rather have you come safe than unexpected. Be modest, Skipper Bill, and reef the *Venture* when she howls for mercy."

"I'll bargain t' reef her, sir," Bill replied, "when I thinks you would yourself."

"Oh, come, skipper!" Sir Archibald laughed.

Bill o' Burnt Bay roared like the lusty sea-dog he was.

"I've good reason for wishing you to go cautiously," said Sir Archibald, gravely.

Bill looked up with interest.

"You've settled at Ruddy Cove, skipper?"

"Ay, sir," Bill answered. "I moved the wife t' Ruddy Cove when I undertook t' build the *Venture*."

"I'm thinking of sending Archie down to spend the summer," said Sir Archibald.

Bill o' Burnt Bay beamed largely and delightedly.

"Do you think," Sir Archibald went on, with a little grin, "that Mrs. Skipper William would care to take him in?"

"*Care?*" Skipper Bill exclaimed. "Why, sir, 'twould be as good as takin' her a stick o' peppermint."

"He'll come aboard this afternoon," said Sir Archibald.

"He'll be second mate o' the *Venture*," Bill declared.

"Skipper," said Sir Archibald, presently, "you'll be wanting this craft insured, I suppose?"

"Well, no, sir," Bill drawled.

Sir Archibald frowned. "No trouble for me to take the papers out for you," said he.

"You see, sir," Bill explained, "I was allowin' t' save that there insurance money."

"Penny wise and pound foolish," said Sir Archibald.

"Oh," drawled Skipper Bill, "I'll manage t' get her t' Ruddy Cove well enough. Anyhow," he added, "'twon't be wind nor sea that will wreck my schooner."

"As you will," said Sir Archibald, shortly; "the craft's yours."

Archie Armstrong came aboard that afternoon —followed by two porters and two trunks. He was Sir Archibald's son; there was no doubt about that: a fine, hardy lad—robust, straight, agile, alert, with his head carried high; merry, quick-minded, ready-tongued, fearless in wind and high sea. His hair was tawny, his eyes blue and wide and clear, his face broad and good-humoured. He was something of a small dandy, too, as the two porters and the two trunks might have explained. The cut of his coat, the knot in his cravat, the polish on his boots, the set of his

knickerbockers, were always matters of deep concern to him. But this did not interfere with his friendship with Billy Topsail, the outport boy. That friendship had been formed in times of peril and hardship, when a boy was a boy, and clothes had had nothing to say in the matter.

Archie bounded up the gangplank, crossed the deck in three leaps and stuck his head into the forecastle.

"Ahoy, Billy Topsail!" he roared.

"Ahoy, yourself!" Billy shouted. "Come below, Archie, an' take a look at Jimmie Grimm."

Jimmie Grimm was at once taken into the company of friends.

Courtesy of "The Youth's Companion"

SHE WAS BEATING LABORIOUSLY INTO A VIOLENT HEAD WIND

CHAPTER X

In Which the Cook Smells Smoke, and the "First Venture," In a Gale of Wind Off the Chunks, Comes Into Still Graver Peril, Which Billy Topsail Discovers

SKIPPER BILL o' Burnt Bay got the *First Venture* under way at dawn of the next day. It was blowing a stiff breeze. A fine, fresh wind was romping fair to the northwest, where, far off, Ruddy Cove lay and Mrs. Skipper William waited.

"I 'low," Skipper Bill mused, as the schooner slipped through the narrows, "that that there insurance wouldn't o' done much harm anyhow."

There was an abrupt change of weather. It came without warning; and there was no hint of apology to the skipper of the *First Venture*. When the schooner was still to the s'uth'ard of the dangerous Chunks, but approaching them, she was beating laboriously into a violent and capricious head wind. Bill o' Burnt Bay, giving heed to Sir Archibald's injunction, kept her well off the group of barren islands. They were

mere rocks, scattered widely. Some of them showed their forbidding heads to passing craft; others were submerged, as though lying in wait. It would be well to sight them, he knew, that he might better lay his course; but he was bound that no lurking rock should "pick up" his ship.

"Somehow or other," he thought, "I wisht I *had* took out that there insurance."

At dusk it began to snow. What with this thick, blinding cloud driving past, shrouding the face of the sea, and what with the tumultuous waves breaking over her, and what with the roaring gale drowning her lee rail, the *First Venture* was having a rough time of it. Skipper Bill, with his hands on the wheel, had the very satisfactory impression, for which he is not to be blamed, that he was "a man." But when, at last, the *First Venture* began to howl for mercy in no uncertain way, he did not hesitate to waive the wild joy of "driving" for the satisfaction of keeping his spars in the sockets.

"Better call the hands, Tom!" he shouted to the first hand. "We'll reef her."

Tom put his head into the forecastle. The fire in the little round stove was roaring lustily;

and the swinging lamp filled the narrow place with warm light.

"Out with you, lads!" Tom cried. "All hands on deck t' reef the mains'l!"

Up they tumbled; and up tumbled Archie Armstrong, and up tumbled Jimmie Grimm, and up tumbled Billy Topsail.

"Blowin' some," thought Archie. "Great sailin' breeze. What's he reefin' for?"

The great sail was obstinate. Ease the schooner as Skipper Bill would, it was still hard for his crew of two men, three lads and a cook to grasp and confine the canvas. Meantime, the schooner lurched along, tossing her head, digging her nose into the frothy waves. A cask on the after deck broke its lashings, pursued a mad and devastating career fore and aft, and at last went spinning into the sea. Skipper Bill devoutly hoped that nothing else would get loose above or below. He cast an apprehensive glance into the darkening cloud of snow ahead. There was no promise to be descried. And to leeward the first islands of the Chunks, which had been sighted an hour ago, had disappeared in the night.

"Lively with that mains'l, lads!" Skipper Bill

shouted, lifting his voice above the wind. "We'll reef the fores'l!"

The crew had been intent upon the task in hand. Not a man had yet smelled smoke. And they continued to wrestle with the obstinate sail, each wishing, heartily enough, to get the dirty-weather job well done, and to return to the comfort of the forecastle. It was the cook who first paused to sniff—to sniff again—and to fancy he smelled smoke. But a gust of wind at that moment bellied his fold of the sail, and he forgot the dawning suspicion in an immediate tussle to reduce the disordered canvas. A few minutes more of desperate work and the mainsail was securely reefed; but these were supremely momentous intervals, during which the fate of the *First Venture* was determined.

"All stowed, sir!" Archie Armstrong shouted to the skipper.

"Get at that fores'l, then!" was the order.

With the customary, "Ay, ay, sir!" shouted cheerily, in the manner of good men and willing lads, the crew ran forward.

Skipper Bill remembers that the cook tripped and went sprawling into the lee scupper; and that he scrambled out of the water with a laugh.

It was the last laugh aboard the *First Venture;* for the condition of the schooner was then instantly discovered.

"Fire!" screamed Billy Topsail.

The *First Venture* was all ablaze forward.

CHAPTER XI

In Which the "First Venture," All Ablaze Forward, Is Headed For the Rocks and Breakers of the Chunks, While Bill o' Burnt Bay and His Crew Wait for the Explosion of the Powder in Her Hold. In Which, Also, a Rope Is Put to Good Use

"FIRE!"

A cloud of smoke broke from the forecastle and was swept off by the wind. A tongue of red flame flashed upward and expired. Skipper Bill did not need the cries of terror and warning to inform him. The *First Venture* was afire! And she was not only afire; she was off the Chunks in a gale of wind and snow.

"Aft, here, one o' you!"

When Billy Topsail took the wheel, the skipper plunged into the forecastle. It was a desperate intention. He was back in a moment, singed and gasping. But in that interval he had made out that the forecastle stove, in some violent lurch of the schooner, had broken loose, and had been bandied about, distributing red

coals in every part. He had made out, moreover, that the situation of the schooner was infinitely perilous, if not, indeed, quite beyond hope. The forecastle was all ablaze. In five minutes it would be a furnace.

"We're lost!" Jimmie Grimm cried, staring at the frothy waves running past.

"Not yet," Archie grimly replied.

They were all of heart and strength and ingenuity; and they worked with all their might. But the buckets of water, and the great seas, which Skipper Bill, in desperation, deliberately shipped, made little impression. It was soon evident that the little *First Venture* was doomed. Meantime, the skipper had brought her before the wind, and she was now flying towards the inhospitable Chunks. The skipper was less concerned for his schooner than for the lives of his crew. The ship was already lost; the crew—well, how *could* the crew survive the rocks and gigantic breakers of the Chunks?

It was the only hope. No small-boat could for a moment live in the sea that was running. The schooner must be beached on the Chunks. There was no other refuge. But how beach her? It was a dark night, with the snow flying thick.

Was it possible to sight a black, low-lying rock? There was nothing for it but to drive with the wind in the hope of striking. There were many islands; she might strike one. But would it really be an island, whereon a man might crawl out of reach of the sea? or would it be a rock swept by the breakers? Chance would determine that. Skipper Bill was powerless.

But would she make the Chunks before she was ablaze from stem to stern? Again, the skipper was powerless; he could do no more than give her all the wind that blew.

So he ordered the reefs shaken out—and waited.

"Tom," said the skipper, presently, to the first hand, "was it you stowed the cargo?"

"Yes, sir."

There was a pause. Archie Armstrong and Jimmie Grimm, aft near the wheel, wondered why the skipper had put the question.

"An' where," the skipper asked, quietly, "did you put the powder?"

"For'ard, sir."

"How far for'ard?"

"Fair up against the forecastle bulkhead!"

The appalling significance of this was plain to

the crew. The bulkhead was a thin partition dividing the forecastle from the hold.

"Archie," Skipper Bill drawled, "you better loose the stays'l sheet. She ought t' do better than this." He paused. "Fair against the forecastle bulkhead?" he continued. "Tom, you better get the hatch off, an' see what you're able t' do about gettin' them six kegs o' powder out. No—bide here!" he added. "Take the wheel again, Billy. Get that hatch off, some o' you."

It was the skipper himself who dropped into the hold. The cargo was packed tight. Heavy barrels of flour, puncheons of molasses, casks of pork and beef, lay between the skipper and the powder. He crawled forward, wriggling in the narrow space between the freight and the deck. No fire had as yet entered the hold; but the place was full of stifling smoke. It was apparent that the removal of the powder would be the labour of hours; and there were no hours left for labour. The skipper could stand the smoke no longer. He retreated towards the hatch. How long it would be before the fire communicated itself to the cargo—how long it would be before the explosion of six kegs of powder would scatter the

wreck of the *First Venture* upon the surface of the sea—no man could tell. But the end was inevitable.

Anxious questions greeted the skipper when again he stood upon the wind-swept deck.

"Close the hatch," said he.

"No chance, sir?" Archie asked.

"No, b'y."

The forecastle was already closed. There was no gleam of fire anywhere to be seen. The bitter wind savoured of smoke; nothing else betrayed the schooner's peril.

"Now, get you all back aft!" was the skipper's command. "Keep her head as it points."

When the crew had crept away to the place remotest from the danger point, Bill o' Burnt Bay went forward to keep a lookout for the rocks and breakers. The burning forecastle was beneath his feet; he could hear the crackling of the fire; and the smoke, rising now more voluminously, troubled his nostrils and throat. It was pitch dark ahead. There was no blacker shadow of land, no white flash of water, to give him hope. It seemed as though an unbroken expanse of sea lay before the labouring *First Venture*. But the skipper knew to the contrary;

somewhere in the night into which he stared—somewhere near, and, momentarily, drawing nearer—lay the Chunks. He wondered if the *First Venture* would strike before the explosion occurred. It must be soon, he knew. The possibility of being off the course did not trouble him.

Soon the seams of the deck began to open. Smoke poured out in thickening clouds. Points of light, fast changing to lines of flame, warned the skipper that he must retreat. It was not, however, until heat and smoke and the certain prospect of collapse compelled him, that he joined the crew. He was not a spectacular hero; when common sense dictated return, he obeyed without delay, and without maudlin complaint. Without a word he took the wheel from Billy Topsail's hands, and without a word he kept the schooner on her course. There was no need of command or advice; men and boys knew their situation and their duty.

"It can't be long," said the cook.

There was now a glow of red light above the forecastle. The fire was about to break through. It was not hard to surmise that the collapse of the bulkhead was imminent.

Rook, the first hand, the last of all. When they were all ashore, they scrambled like mad up the cliff; and they were no more than out of danger when the *First Venture* was blown to atoms. There was a flash, a deafening roar—and darkness; broken only by the spluttering splinters of the little craft.

That night, from Heart's Harbour, the folk observed a ship afire, running in towards the Chunks. To the report they sent immediately to St. John's—there happens fortunately to be a government telegraph station at Heart's Harbour—they added, later, that she had blown up. But from St. John's the salvage-tug *Hurricane* was dispatched into the stormy sea in search of the survivors; and on the second day following she picked up Skipper Bill o' Burnt Bay and his crew.

Next day they were in St. John's.

"Wisht I'd took your advice about the insurance, sir," broken-hearted Bill o' Burnt Bay said to Sir Archibald.

Sir Archibald laughed. "I took it for you," said he.

"What?" Skipper Bill exploded.

"I insured the *First Venture* on my own responsibility," Sir Archibald replied. "You shall build the *Second Venture* at Ruddy Cove next winter."

Archie Armstrong and Bill o' Burnt Bay, with the lads and men of the lost *First Venture*, went back to Ruddy Cove by rail and the mail-boat.

CHAPTER XII

In Which Old David Grey, Once of the Hudson Bay Company, Begins the Tale of How Donald McLeod, the Factor at Fort Refuge, Scorned a Compromise With His Honour, Though His Arms Were Pinioned Behind Him and a Dozen Tomahawks Were Flourished About His Head

ARCHIE ARMSTRONG was presently established in a white little room in the beaming Aunt "Bill's" little white cottage at Ruddy Cove. His two trunks—two new trunks, now—were there established with him, of course; and they contained a new outfit of caps, shoes, boots, sweaters, coats, gloves, and what not, suited to every circumstance and all sorts of weather. Then began for Archie, Jimmie and Billy—with Bagg, of the London gutters, sometimes included—hearty times ashore and afloat. It was Bagg, indeed, who proposed the cruise to Birds' Nest Islands.

"I said I wouldn't go t' Birds' Nest Islands, said Billy Topsail, "an' I won't."

"Ah, come on, Billy," Archie pleaded.

"I said I wouldn't," Billy repeated, obstinately, "an' I won't."

"That ain't nothink," Bagg argued.

"Anyhow," said Billy, "I won't, for I got my reasons."[1]

David Grey, a bent old fellow, who was now long "past his labour," as they say in Newfoundland, sat within hearing. Boy and man he had been in the service of the Hudson Bay Company, as hunter, clerk, trader, explorer, factor; and here, on the coast where he had been born, he had settled down to spend the rest of his days. He was not an ignorant man, but, on the contrary, an intelligent one, educated by service, wide evening study of books, and hard experience in the great wildernesses of the Canadian Northwest, begun, long ago, when he was a lad.

"You make me think of Donald McLeod," said he.

The boys drew near.

"It was long ago," David went on. "Long, long ago," the old man repeated. "It was 'way

[1] Billy Topsail's reasons were no doubt connected with an encounter with a gigantic devil-fish at Birds' Nest Islands, as related in "The Adventures of Billy Topsail."

back in the first half of the last century, for I was little more than a boy then. McLeod was factor at Fort Refuge, a remote post, situated three hundred miles or more to the northeast of Lake Superior, but now abandoned. And a successful, fair-dealing trader he was, but so stern and taciturn as to keep both his helpers and his half-civilized customers in awe of him. It was deep in the wilderness—not the wilderness as you boys know it, where a man might wander night and day without fear of wild beast or savage, but a vast, unexplored place, with dangers lurking everywhere.

"'Grey,' he said to me when I reported for duty, fresh from headquarters, 'if you do your duty by me, I'll do mine by you.'

"'I'll try to,' said I.

"'When you know me better,' said McLeod, with quiet emphasis, 'you'll know that I stand by my word.'

"We dealt, of course, with the Indians, who, spring and fall, brought their furs to the fort, and never failed to remain until they had wasted their earnings in the fashion that best pleased their fancy.

"Even then the Indians were degenerate, given

over to idleness and debauchery; but they were not so far sunk in these habits as are the dull, lazy fellows who sell you the baskets and beaded moccasins that the squaws make to-day. They were superstitious, malicious, revengeful, and they were almost in a condition of savagery, for the only law they knew was the law our guns enforced. Some authority was vested in the factor, and he was not slow to exert it when a flagrant offense was committed near by.

"'There's no band of Indians in these parts,' I was told, 'that can scare McLeod. He'll see justice done for and against them as between man and man.'

"Fort Refuge was set in a wide clearing. It was built of logs and surrounded by a high, stout stockade. Admittance to the yard was by a great gate, which was closed promptly at sundown, and always strongly barred. We had no garrison regularly stationed there to defend us. In all, it may be, we could muster nine men—McLeod, two clerks, and a number of stout fellows who helped handle the stores. Moreover, were our gate to be closed and our fort surrounded by a hostile force, we should be utterly cut off from communication with those quarters

whence relief might come. We had the company's wares to guard, and we knew that once we were overcome, whatever the object of the attack, the wares and our lives would be lost together.

"'But we can stand a long siege,' I used to think; and indeed there was good ground for comfort in that.

"Our stockade was impregnable to an attack by force, no doubt; but as it soon appeared, it was no more than a paper ribbon before the wily strategy of the Indians. One night, when I had shut the gates and dropped the bars, I heard a long-drawn cry—a scream, in which it was not hard to detect the quality of terror and great stress. It came, as I thought, from the edge of the forest. When it was repeated, near at hand, my heart went to my mouth, for I knew that a band of Indians was encamped beyond, and had been carousing for a week past. Then came a knocking at the gate—a desperate pounding and kicking.

"'Let me in! Open! Open!' I heard a man cry.

"I had my hands on the bar to lift it and throw open the gate when McLeod came out of his house.

"'Stop!' he shouted.

"I withdrew from the gate. He approached, waved me back, and put his own hand on the bar.

"'Who's there?' he asked.

"'Let me in, McLeod. It's Landley. Quick! Open the gate, or I'll be killed!'

"McLeod's hesitation vanished. He opened the gate. A man stumbled in. Then the gate was shut with a bang.

"'What's this about, Landley?' McLeod said, sternly. 'What trouble have you got yourself into now?'

"I knew Landley for a white man who had abandoned himself to a shiftless, vicious life with the Indians. He had sunk lower, even, than they. He was an evil, worthless, ragged fellow, despised within the fort and respected nowhere. But while he stood there, gasping and terror-stricken, I pitied him; and it may be McLeod himself was stirred by the mere kinship of colour.

"'Speak up, man!' he commanded. 'What have you done?'

"'I've done no wrong,' Landley whimpered. 'Buffalo Horn's young son has died, and they put the blame on me. They say I've cast the

evil eye on him. They say I killed him with a spell. You know me, McLeod. You know I haven't got the evil eye. Don't turn me out, man. They're coming to kill me. Don't give me up. You know I'm not blood-guilty. You know me. You know I haven't got the evil eye.'

"'Tush, man!' said McLeod. 'Is that all the trouble?'

"'That's all!' Landley cried. 'I've done no harm. Don't give me up to them.'

"'I won't,' McLeod said, positively. 'You're safe here until they prove you blood-guilty. I'll not give you up.'"

Old David Grey paused; and Jimmie demanded:

"Did they give un up?"

"Was they *wild* Indians?" Bagg gasped.

David laughed. "You just wait and see," said he.

CHAPTER XIII

In Which There Are Too Many Knocks At the Gate, a Stratagem Is Successful, Red Feather Draws a Tomahawk, and an Indian Girl Appears On the Scene

"McLEOD turned on his heel and went to the shop," David continued; "and when he had ordered a watch to be kept on the clearing on all sides, we devoted ourselves to the matter in hand—the preparation of the regular quarterly statement for the officials at headquarters. But as we laboured, hatchets, knives and the cruel, evil faces of the savages, by whom, as I chose to think, we were threatened, mixed themselves with the figures, to my bewilderment.

"Soon the dusk came, and while I trimmed and lighted the candles in the shadowy outer room there seemed to be shapes in the corners which I had never seen there in quieter times. McLeod, however, was unperturbed. He had forgotten all about the numerous band which he stood ready to defy.

"'Do you think there is danger?' said I.

"'Danger?' said he. 'From what?'

"'Buffalo Horn's band,' said I.

"'Nonsense!' said he. 'What is that last total? There seems to be a shilling and sixpence missing here.'

"At that moment one of the helpers came in. He was visibly excited—like a man who bears tidings.

"'Red Feather is at the gate,' he said.

"'Is he alone?' said McLeod.

"'Yes, sir. We made sure of that.'

"'Fetch him here,' said the factor, calmly. 'Take Tom and Tobias to the gate, and don't let Red Feather hold it open.'

"Red Feather was soon brought in. He was the chief of the band, an old, crafty Indian, chief in name, but inferior in authority to Buffalo Horn, who was chief in fact. McLeod continued his work.

"'Let us talk,' said Red Feather, at last.

"He spoke in his own tongue, which I shall interpret freely for you. McLeod put his pen aside and faced about.

"'What have we to talk about?' he asked. 'The trading is done. You have your supplies. There is no business between us.'

"'We have the white man to talk about,' said Red Feather. 'He has killed a child of our tribe, and you have given him refuge here. He has killed the son of Buffalo Horn with the evil eye. He must be put to death.'

"'I know this man,' said McLeod. 'He has not the evil eye. He has killed no man, and he shall not be given up.'

"'His life is forfeit to the tribe.'

"'His life is in my keeping. I have said that he shall not lose it. Am I the man to break my word?'

"'You have kept your word between us,' said Red Feather. 'You are not the man to break your word.'

"'What business, then, lies between us? Our talk is done.'

"The guard at the gate interrupted. 'There is a man knocking at the gate,' he said.

"'It is my brother,' said Red Feather. 'He comes to join the talk. Let him in.'

"'Open the gate,' said McLeod.

"It was growing dark. I went with the guard to admit the brother of Red Feather. Dusk had fallen over the clearing. The sky was overcast; in half an hour it would be deep night,

the clearing one with the forest. But we opened the gate. A tall Indian stalked in. He was alone, and I knew him for the brother of Red Feather. I followed him to the shop, making sure first that the bar was in place.

"'Let us have the white man,' he said to McLeod. 'Let the peace between us continue.'

"McLeod perceived the threat. He was not a rash man. He had no wish to provoke a conflict, but he had no thought of surrendering the refugee. As for me, my trust was in the stockade.

"'I will talk with the white man,' he said.

"The factor was gone for half an hour. He secreted Landley, inspected the defenses, gathered the women and children in the blockhouse, and returned to the council.

"'The white man is not blood-guilty,' he said, proudly. 'I have promised him protection and he shall have it.'

"Again the helper came. 'There is another knock at the gate,' said he.

"'Who is there?' said McLeod.

"'It's so dark I can't see,' said the helper.

"'The man is my cousin,' said Red Feather. 'He has come to talk with us. Let him in, for he is a wise man and may help us.'

"'Open the gate,' said McLeod.

"We sat silent, waiting for the cousin of Red Feather, the wise man who might help us. I heard the rattle of the bar as the helper lifted it, then the creak of the gate. Then a furious outcry, a confusion of howls and screams, a war-whoop and a rush of feet. The Indians were within the stockade. A moment later they burst into the shop and advanced upon us, uttering blood-curdling whoops and brandishing their hatchets and knives. McLeod reached for the musket above the desk, but before his fingers touched it Red Feather caught him by the arms, and with the help of the brother made him prisoner. At the same instant I was secured.

"'Let us strike! Let us strike!' the Indians kept shouting, all the while dancing about us, flourishing their weapons.

"The danger was real and terrible. We were at the mercy of the band, and at that moment I did not doubt that they were bent on murder and pillage. There had been a cruel massacre at Fort Pine but a few months before. The story was fresh in my mind. That crime had gone unpunished; nor was it likely that a

sufficient force would be sent west to give the band their due. There was nothing now to deter Red Feather's men from committing a similar outrage. We were remote from our kind, on the edge of a wilderness into which escape was a simple matter. Our guns, as I have said, had been our law and defense, and we were now utterly in the power of our enemies.

"'Let us strike! Let us strike!' was the cry.

"Buffalo Horn had come in with the band. It was soon evident that to the restraining influence of his presence was due our respite. He waved his braves back. They withdrew and became quiet.

"'Will you give the murderer of my child to our tribe?' the chief said to McLeod.

"'He is no longer mine to give,' said the factor.

"'Will you give him to us in peace and forget that he has gone with us?'

"McLeod was still in the grasp of Red Feather and his brother. Buffalo Horn was facing him. Behind the chief, awaiting his signal, was the band, with knives and hatchets in hand.

"'No,' said McLeod.

"The tumult was renewed. The Indians ad-

Courtesy of "The Youth's Companion"

BUFFALO HORN LOOKED STEADILY INTO McLEOD'S EYES.

vanced, threatening the factor with their weapons and crying out for his death. But McLeod was not to be terrified.

"'Let us take the white man,' said Buffalo Horn, lifting his hand for silence. 'We have no quarrel with you. Let all be as it was.'

"'No,' said McLeod. 'I will never consent to his murder.'

"'Let us take him.'

"'I said I wouldn't,' said McLeod, 'and I won't.'

"It seemed to me that the end had come. Buffalo Horn looked steadily into McLeod's eyes. McLeod gave him glance for glance. He was ready to die for the word he had passed. The Indian hesitated. It may be that he did not want to precipitate the slaughter. Then he turned, as if to give the signal. Before his hand was raised, however, the daughter of the Indian interpreter of the post pushed her way through the band of braves and stood before their chief.

"'Listen,' said she. 'Have you come to rob the great company of its goods?'

"'No,' said Buffalo Horn. 'We have no quarrel with the great company.'

"She was a slip of a girl, to whom, in sickness and in health, McLeod had been unfailingly kind. She knew no fear, and in intelligence she was superior to all the other women of her race I have known.

"'Have you come to take the life of this man?' she went on, moving closer to Buffalo Horn, and looking deep into his eyes.

"'No,' said the chief, 'we have no quarrel with this man. He is a good man, but he will not deliver the murderer of my child.'

"'Will you take his life because of that?'

"'No; we will take his life because he will betray our part in the death of the white man whom he has tried to shelter.'

"'There are others who might betray you.'

"'And their lives, also,' said Buffalo Horn, composedly.

"All that had been implied was now expressed. He was to massacre us all to shield his tribe from the punishment that might follow the discovery of his revenge.

"'You will lay waste the fort,' said the interpreter's daughter, 'but will the ruins not accuse you to the great company which this man serves?'

"'We will be far away.'

"'And will you never care to return to the grounds you have hunted from childhood?'

"To this Buffalo Horn made no reply. He looked at the floor, his arms folded, and he was silent for a long time.

"'This man,' said the girl, touching McLeod on the shoulder, 'has dealt fairly by you. He has kept his faith with you. He said that he would provide you with food through the hard seasons. Has he not done so?'

"'He has kept faith with us,' said the chief. 'Therefore he is a good man.'

"'He is a good man because he has kept faith with you,' the girl said, eagerly. 'Would you, then, have him break faith with some other? He has said to the white man, "I will not give you up." Would you have him break the word he has passed? For if he breaks it once, will he not break it again? If he should yield up the white man, what security would you have that he would provide for you through the next hard season?'

"'He keeps his word,' said Buffalo Horn. 'He is a good man.'

"He made a sign to Red Feather to release

McLeod. Then he gathered his braves about him, and stalking solemnly at their head, led them out of the shop, over the courtyard and through the gate. We were left alone.

"'Leave the gate open, Tobias,' said McLeod. 'Come, boy,' to me, 'let us get to work on the quarterly statement again. This interruption came at an awkward time. We'll have to make up for it.'"

That was the end of David's story.

CHAPTER XIV

In Which Jimmie Grimm and Master Bagg Are Overtaken by the Black Fog in the Open Sea and Lose the Way Home While a Gale is Brewing

JIMMIE GRIMM and Bagg, returning from Birds' Nest Islands, were caught by the black fog in the open sea. It had been lowering all day. Dull clouds had hung in the sky since early morning and had kept the waters of the sea sombre. There was no wind—not the faintest breath or sigh. The harbour water was still; and the open—beyond the tickle rocks—was without a ripple or hint of ground swell. A thick, gray mist crept out from the hills, late in the afternoon, and presently obscured the shore. Jimmie and Bagg were then off Mad Mull. Two miles of flat sea and windless space lay between the punt and the harbour.

"Goin' t' be thick as mud," Jimmie grumbled.

"Wisht we was more inshore," said Bagg, anxiously.

At dusk the fog was so thick that every landmark had been blotted from sight.

"Is *you* able t' see Mad Mull?" Jimmie demanded.

"I is *not*," said Bagg.

Mad Mull was lost in the fog. It was the last landmark. The tickle rocks, through which a passage leads to the harbour, had long ago vanished.

"Wisht we was home," said Bagg.

"Don't you go an' get scared, Bagg," Jimmie laughed. "Never you fear. *I'll* take *you* home."

It was hot, dark and damp—a breathless evening. There was a menace in the still air and heat. A roll of thunder sounded from the northeast.

"I 'low 'twill blow afore long," said Jimmie.

"'Urry up," said Bagg.

Jimmie put a little more strength into the rowing. The punt moved faster, but not fast enough to please Bagg, who was terrified by the fog, the thunder and the still, black water.

"Never you fear," Jimmie grumbled; "you'll get home afore the wind comes."

Bagg wasn't so sure of that.

"An' it *will* come," Jimmie reflected. "I can fair feel it on the way."

Jimmie pulled doggedly. Occasionally a rumble of thunder came out of the northeast to enliven his strokes. There was no wind, however, as yet, except, perhaps, an adverse stirring of the air—the first hint of a gale. On and on crept the punt. There was no lessening of the heat. Jimmie and Bagg fairly gasped. They fancied it had never been so hot before. But Jimmie did not weaken at the oars; he was stout-hearted and used to labour, and the punt did not lag. On they went through the mist without a mark to guide them. Roundabout was a wall of darkening fog. It hid the whole world.

"Must be gettin' close inshore," said Jimmie, at last, while he rested on his oars, quite bewildered.

"What you stoppin' for?" Bagg demanded.

"Seems t' me," said Jimmie, scratching his head in a puzzled way, "that we ought t' be in the tickle by this time."

It was evident, however, that they were not in the tickle.[1] There was no sign of the rocks on either hand. Jimmie gazed about him in every direction for a moment. He saw nothing except

[1] A "tickle" is a narrow passage of water between two islands. It is also (as here used) a narrow passage leading into harbour.

a circle of black water about the boat. Beyond was the black wall of fog.

"Wonderful queer," thought he, as he dipped his oars in the water again; "but I 'low we ought t' be in the harbour."

There was a louder clap of thunder.

"We'll have that wind afore long," mused Jimmie.

"You 'aven't gone an' lost your way, 'ave you?" Bagg inquired in a frightened voice.

"Wonderful queer," Jimmie replied. "We *ought* t' be in the harbour by this time. I 'low maybe I been pullin' too far t' the nor'east."

"No, you 'aven't," said Bagg; "you been pullin' too far t' the sou'east."

"I 'low not," mused Jimmie.

"'Ave, too," Bagg sniffed.

Jimmie was not quite sure, after all. He wavered. Something seemed to be wrong. It didn't *feel* right. Some homing instinct told him that the tickle rocks did not lie in the direction in which the bow of the punt pointed. In fact, the whole thing was queer—very queer! But he had not pulled too far to the southeast; he was sure of that. Perhaps, too far to the northeast. He determined to change his course.

"Now, Bagg," said he, confidently, "I'll take you into harbour."

A clap of thunder—sounding near at hand—urged the boy on.

"Wisht you would," Bagg whimpered.

Jimmie turned the boat's head. He wondered if he had turned far enough. Then he fancied he had turned too far. Why, of course, thought he, he had turned too far! He swerved again towards the original direction. This, however, did not feel just right. Again he changed the course of the boat. He wondered if the harbour lay ahead. Or was it the open sea? Was he pulling straight out from shore? Would the big wind catch the little punt out of harbour?

"How's she headin' now?" he asked Bagg.

"You turned too far," said Bagg.

"Not far enough," said Jimmie.

Jimmie rowed doggedly on the course of his choosing for half an hour or more without developing anything to give him a clue to their whereabouts. Night added to the obscurity. They might have been on a shoreless waste of water for all that they were able to see. The mist made the night impenetrable. Jimmie could but dimly distinguish Bagg's form, although he

sat not more than five feet from him; soon he could not see him at all. At last he lifted his oars and looked over the bow.

"I don't know where we is," he said.

"No more do I," Bagg sobbed.

"I 'low we're lost," Jimmie admitted.

Just then the first gust of wind rippled the water around the boat and went whistling into the mist.

CHAPTER XV

In Which it Appears to Jimmie Grimm and Master Bagg That Sixty Seconds Sometimes Make More Than a Minute

RUDDY COVE is deep—vastly deep—except in one part. That is in Burnt Cove within the harbour. There at low tide it is shallow. Rocks protrude from the water—dripping and covered with a slimy seaweed. And Burnt Cove lies near the tickle to the sea. You pass between the tickle rocks, bear sharply to the right and are presently in the cove. It is a big expanse, snugly sheltered; and it shallows so slowly that there are many acres of quiet water in which the little fellows of Ruddy Cove learn to swim.

Ezekiel Rideout's cottage was by Burnt Cove; and Bagg wished most heartily that he were there.

But Bagg was at sea. And the punt was a small one. It was not Jimmie Grimm's fishing

punt; it was a shallow little rodney, which Jimmie's father used for going about in when the ice and seals were off the coast. It was so small and light that it could be carried over the pans of ice from one lane of open water to another. And being small and light it was cranky. It was no rough weather boat; nor was it a boat to move very much about in, as both boys were quite well aware.

Bagg heard Jimmie's oars rattle in the rowlocks and the blades strike the water. The boat moved forward. Jimmie began to row with all his strength—almost angrily. It was plain that he was losing his temper. And not only did he lose his temper; he had grown tired before he regained it.

"Here, Bagg," said he; "you have a go at it."

"I'll 'ave a try," Bagg agreed.

Jimmie let the oars swing to the side and Bagg made ready to steady the little boat. Bagg heard him rise. The boat rocked a little.

"Steady!" Bagg gasped.

"Steady, yourself!" Jimmie retorted. "Think I don't know how t' get around in a rodney?"

It was now so dark, what with night and fog, that Bagg could not see Jimmie. But presently

he understood that Jimmie was on his feet waiting for him to rise in his turn. They were to exchange places. Bagg got to his feet, and, with all the caution he could command, advanced a step, stretching out his hands as he did so. But Bagg had not been born on the coast and was not yet master of himself in a boat. He swayed to the left—fairly lurched.

"Have a care!" Jimmie scolded.

Have you never, in deep darkness, suddenly felt a loss of power to keep your equilibrium? You open your eyes to their widest. Nothing is to be seen. You have no longer a sense of perpendicularity. You sway this way and that, groping for something to keep you from falling. And that is just what happened to Bagg. He was at best shaky on his legs in a boat; and now, in darkness and fear, his whole mind was fixed on finding something to grasp with his hands.

"Is you ready?" asked Jimmie.

"Uh-huh!" Bagg gasped.

"Come on," said Jimmie; "but mind what you're about."

Bagg made a step forward. Again the boat rocked; again the darkness confused him, and

he had to stop to regain his balance. In the pause it struck him with unpleasant force that he could not swim. He was sure, moreover, that the boat would sink if she filled. He wished he had not thought of that. A third half-crawling advance brought him within reach of Jimmie. He caught Jimmie's outstretched hand and drew himself forward until they were very close.

"Look out!" he cried.

He had crept too far to the right. The boat listed alarmingly. They caught each other about the middle, and crouched down, waiting, rigid, until she had come to an even keel.

Presently they were ready to pass each other.

"Now," said Jimmie.

Bagg made the attempt to pass him. The foothold was uncertain; the darkness was confusing. He moved to the side, but so great was his agitation that he miscalculated, and the boat tipped suddenly under his weight. The water swept over the gunwale. Bagg would have fallen bodily from the punt had it not been for Jimmie's clutch on his arm. In the light they might have steadied themselves; in the dark they could not.

Jimmie drew Bagg back—but too hurriedly,

too strongly, too far. The side of the boat over which he had almost fallen leaped high in the air and the opposite gunwale was submerged. Jimmie released him, and Bagg collapsed into a sitting posture in the bottom. Instinctively he grasped the gunwales and frantically tried to right the boat. He felt the water slowly curling over.

"She's goin' down," said Jimmie.

"Sinkin'!" Bagg sobbed.

The boat sank very slowly, gently swaying from side to side. Bagg and Jimmie could see nothing, and all they could hear was the gurgle and hissing of the water as it curled over the gunwales and eddied in the bottom of the boat. Bagg felt the water rise over his legs—creep to his waist—rise to his chest—and still ascend. Through those seconds he was incapable of action. He did not think; he just waited.

Jimmie wondered where the shore was. A yard or a mile away? In which direction would it be best to strike out? How could he help Bagg? He must not leave Bagg to drown. But how could he help him? What was the use of trying, anyhow? If he could not row ashore, how could he manage to swim ashore? And if

he could not get ashore himself, how could he help Bagg ashore?

Nothing was said. Neither boy breathed. Both waited. And it seemed to both that the water was slow in coming aboard. But the water came. It came slowly, perhaps—but surely. It rose to Bagg's shoulders—to his chin—it seemed to be about to cover his mouth and nostrils. Bagg already had a stifled sensation—a frantic fear of smothering; a wish to breathe deep. But he did not stir; he could not rise.

The boys felt a slight shock. The water rose no more. There was a moment of deep silence.

"I—I—I 'low we've grounded!" Jimmie Grimm stuttered.

The silence continued.

"We sure is!" Jimmie cried.

"Wh-wh-where 'ave we got to?" Bagg gasped, his teeth chattering with the fright that was not yet passed.

Silence again.

"Ahoy, there!" came a voice from near at hand in the foggy night. "What you boys doin' out there?"

"We're in Burnt Cove," said Jimmie, in

amazement, to Bagg. "'Tis Uncle Zeke's voice —an', ay, look!—there's the cottage light on the hill."

"We're comin' ashore, Uncle Zeke," Bagg shouted.

The boat had grounded in less than three feet of water. Jimmie had brought her through the tickle without knowing it. The boys emptied her and dragged her ashore just as the rain and wind came rushing from the open sea.

That's why Jimmie used to say with a laugh:

"Sixty seconds sometimes makes more than a minute."

"Bet yer life!" Bagg would add.

CHAPTER XVI

In Which Archie Armstrong Joins a Piratical Expedition and Sails Crested Seas to Cut Out the Schooner "Heavenly Home"

IT was quite true that Archie Armstrong could speak French; it was just as true, as Bill o' Burnt Bay observed, that he could jabber it like a native. There was no detecting a false accent. There was no hint of an awkward Anglo-Saxon tongue in his speech. There was no telling that he was not French born and Paris bred. Archie's French nurse and cosmopolitan-English tutor had taken care of that. The boy had pattered French with the former since he had first begun to prattle at all.

And this was why Bill o' Burnt Bay proposed a piratical expedition to the French islands of Miquelon which lie off the south coast of Newfoundland.

"Won't ye go, b'y?" he pleaded.

Archie laughed until his sides ached.

"Come, now!" Bill urged; "there's like t' be

a bit of a shindy that Sir Archibald hisself would be glad t' have a hand in."

"'Tis sheer piracy!" Archie chuckled.

"'Tis nothin' of the sort!" the indignant Skipper William protested. "'Tis but a poor man takin' his own from thieves an' robbers."

"Have you ever been to Saint Pierre?" Archie asked.

"That I has!" Skipper Bill ejaculated; "an' much t' the grief o' Saint Pierre."

"They've a jail there, I'm told."

"Sure 'tis like home t' me," said Skipper Bill. "I've been in it; an' I'm told they've an eye open t' clap me in once more."

Archie laughed again.

"Jus' t' help a poor man take back his own without troublin' the judges," Bill urged.

The lad hesitated.

"Sure, I've sore need o' your limber French tongue," said Bill. "Sure, b'y, you'll go along with me, will you not?"

"Why don't you go to law for your own?" Archie asked, with a little grin.

"Law!" Bill o' Burnt Bay burst out. "'Tis a poor show I'd have in a court at Saint Pierre.

Hut!" he snorted. "Law!—for a Newfoundlander in Saint Pierre!"

"My father——" Archie began.

"I'll have the help o' no man's money nor brains nor influence in a business so simple," Bill protested.

The situation was this: Bill o' Burnt Bay had chartered a schooner—his antique schooner—the schooner that was forever on the point of sinking with all hands—Bill had chartered the schooner *Heavenly Home* to Luke Foremast of Boney Arm to run a cargo from Saint Pierre. But no sooner had the schooner appeared in French waters than she was impounded for a debt that Luke Foremast unhappily owed Garnot & Cie, of Saint Pierre. It was a high-handed proceeding, of course; and it was perhaps undertaken without scruple because of the unpopularity of all Newfoundlanders.

Luke Foremast protested in an Anglo-Saxon roar; but roar and bellow and bark and growl as he would, it made no difference: the *Heavenly Home* was seized, condemned and offered for sale, as Bill o' Burnt Bay had but now learned.

"'Tis a hard thing to do," Archie objected.

"Hut!" Bill exclaimed. "'Tis nothin' but

goin' aboard in the dark an' puttin' quietly out t' sea."

"Anyhow," Archie laughed, "I'll go."

Sir Archibald Armstrong liked to have his son stand upon his own feet. He did not wish to be unduly troubled with requests for permission; he fancied it a babyish habit for a well-grown boy to fall into. The boy should decide for himself, said he, where decision was reasonably possible for him; and if he made mistakes he would surely pay for them and learn caution and wisdom. For this reason Archie had no hesitation in coming to his own decision and immediately setting out with Bill o' Burnt Bay upon an expedition which promised a good deal of highly diverting and wholly unusual experience.

Billy Topsail and Jimmie Grimm wished the expedition luck when it boarded the mail-boat that night.

Archie Armstrong did not know until they were well started that Bill o' Burnt Bay was a marked man in Saint Pierre. There was no price on his head, to be sure, but he was answerable for several offenses which would pass current in St. John's for assault and battery, if not

for assault with intent to maim or kill (which Bill had never tried to do)—all committed in those old days when he was young and wild and loved a ruction better than a prayer-meeting.

They determined to make a landing by stealth—a wise precaution, as it appeared to Archie. So in three days they were at La Maline, a small fishing harbour on the south coast of Newfoundland, and a port of call for the Placentia Bay mail-boat. The Iles Saint Pierre et Miquelon, the remnant of the western empire of the French, lay some twenty miles to the southwest, across a channel which at best is of uncertain mood, and on this day was as forbidding a waste of waves and gray clouds as it had been Archie's lot to venture out upon.

Bill o' Burnt Bay had picked up his ideal of a craft for the passage—a skiff so cheap and rotten that "'twould be small loss, sir, if she sank under us." And the skipper was in a roaring good humour as with all sail set he drove the old hulk through that wilderness of crested seas; and big Josiah Cove, who had been taken along to help sail the *Heavenly Home*, as he swung the bail bucket, was not a whit behind in glowing expectation—in particular, that expectation which

concerned an encounter with a gendarme with whom he had had the misfortune to exchange nothing but words upon a former occasion.

As for Archie, at times he felt like a smuggler, and capped himself in fancy with a red turban, at times like a pirate.

They made Saint Pierre at dusk—dusk of a thick night, with the wind blowing half a gale from the east. They had no mind to subject themselves to those formalities which might precipitate embarrassing disclosures; so they ran up the harbour as inconspicuously as might be, all the while keeping a covert lookout for the skinny old craft which they had come to cut out. The fog, drifting in as they proceeded, added its shelter to that of the night; and they dared to make a search.

They found her at last, lying at anchor in the isolation of government waters—a most advantageous circumstance.

"Take the skiff 'longside, skipper," said Josiah.

"'Tis a bit risky, Josiah, b'y," said Skipper Bill. "But 'twould be good—now, really, 'twould —'twould be good t' tread her old deck for a spell."

"An' lay a hand to her wheel," said Josiah,

with a side wink so broad that the darkening mist could not hide it.

"An' lay a hand to her wheel," repeated the skipper. "An' lay a hand to her wheel!"

They ran in—full into the lee of her—and rounded to under the stern. The sails of the skiff flapped noisily and the water slapped her sides. They rested breathless—waiting an event which might warn them to be off into hiding in the fog. But no disquieting sound came from the schooner—no startled exclamation, no hail, no footfall: nothing but the creaking of the anchor chain and the rattle of the blocks aloft. A schooner loomed up and shot past like a shadow; then silence.

Archie gave a low hail in French. There was no response from the *Heavenly Home;* nor did a second hail, in a raised voice, bring forth an answering sound. It was all silent and dark aboard. So Skipper Bill out with the gaff and drew the boat up the lee side. He chuckled a bit and shook himself. It seemed to Archie that he freed his arms and loosened his great muscles as for a fight. With a second chuckle he caught the rail, leaped from the skiff like a cat and rolled over on the deck of his own schooner.

They heard the thud of his fall—a muttered word or two, mixed up with laughter—then the soft fall of his feet departing aft. For a long time nothing occurred to inform them of what the skipper was about. They strained their ears. In the end they heard a muffled cry, which seemed to come out of the shoreward cloud of fog—a thud, as though coming from a great distance—and nothing more.

"What's that?" Archie whispered.

"'Tis a row aboard a Frenchman t' win'ard, sir," said Josiah. "'Tis a skipper beatin' a 'prentice. They does it a wonderful lot."

Five minutes passed without a sign of the skipper. Then he came forward on a run. His feet rang on the deck. There was no concealment.

"I've trussed up the watchman!" he chortled.

Archie and Josiah clambered aboard.

CHAPTER XVII

In Which Bill o' Burnt Bay Finds Himself in Jail and Archie Armstrong Discovers That Reality is Not as Diverting as Romance

TO be sure, Bill o' Burnt Bay had overcome the watchman! He had blundered upon him in the cabin. Being observed before he could withdraw, he had leaped upon this functionary with resistless impetuosity—had overpowered him, gagged him, trussed him like a turkey cock and rolled him into his bunk. The waters roundabout gave no sign of having been apprised of the capture. No cry of surprise rang out—no call for help—no hullabaloo of pursuit. The lights of the old town twinkled in the foggy night in undisturbed serenity.

The night was thick, and the wind swept furiously up from the sea. It would be a dead beat to windward to make the open—a sharp beat through a rock-strewn channel in a rising gale.

"Now we got her," Skipper Bill laughed, "what'll we do with her?"

Archie and Josiah laughed, too: a hearty explosion.

"We can never beat out in this wind," said Bill; "an' we couldn't handle her if we did—not in a gale o' wind like this. All along," he chuckled, "I been 'lowin' for a fair wind an' good weather."

They heard the rattle and creak of oars approaching; to which, in a few minutes, the voices of two men added a poignant interest. The rowers rested on their oars, as though looking about; then the oars splashed the water again, and the dory shot towards the *Heavenly Home*. Bill o' Burnt Bay and his fellow pirates lay flat on the deck. The boat hung off the stern of the schooner.

"Jean!"

The hail was in French. It was not answered, you may be sure, from the *Heavenly Home*.

"Jean!"

"He's not aboard," spoke up the other man.

"He must be aboard. His dory's tied to the rail. Jean! Jean Morot!"

"Come—let's be off to the *Voyageur*. He's asleep." A pair of oars fell in the water.

"Come—take your oars. It's too rough to lie here. And it's late enough."

"But——"

"Take your oars!" with an oath.

The Newfoundlanders breathed easier when they heard the splash and creak and rattle receding; but they did not rise until the sounds were out of hearing, presumably in the direction of the *Voyageur*.

Bill o' Burnt Bay began to laugh again. Archie joined him. But Josiah Cove pointed out the necessity of doing something—anything—and doing it quickly. It was all very well to laugh, said he; and although it might seem a comical thing to be standing on the deck of a captured schooner, the comedy would be the Frenchman's if they were caught in the act. But Archie still chuckled away; the situation was quite too ridiculous to be taken seriously. Archie had never been a pirate before; he didn't feel like one now—but he rather liked the feeling he had.

"We can't stay aboard," said he, presently.

"Blest if I want t' go ashore," said Bill.

"We *got* t' go ashore," Josiah put in.

Before they left the deck of the *Heavenly Home* (the watchman having then been made more comfortable), it was agreed that the schooner could not make the open sea in the teeth of the wind. That was obvious; and it was just as obvious that the Newfoundlander could not stay aboard. The discovery of the watchman in the cabin must be chanced until such a time as a fair wind came in the night. On their way to the obscure wharf at which they landed it was determined that Josiah should board the schooner at nine o'clock, noon, and six o'clock of the next day to feed the captured watchman and to set the galley fire going for half an hour to allay suspicion.

"An' Skipper Bill," said Josiah, seriously, "you lie low. If you don't you're liable to be took up."

"Take your advice t' yourself," the skipper retorted. "Your reputation's none o' the best in this harbour."

"We'll sail to-morrow night," said Archie.

"Given a dark night an' a fair wind," the skipper qualified.

Skipper Bill made his way to a quiet café of his acquaintance; and Josiah vanished in the

fog to lie hidden with a shipmate of other days. Archie—depending upon his youth and air and accent and well-tailored dress to avert suspicion—went boldly to the Hotel Joinville and sat down to dinner. The dinner was good; he enjoyed it, and was presently delighting in the romance in which he had a part. It all seemed too good to be true. How glad he was he had come! To be here—in the French Islands of Miquelon—to have captured a schooner—to have a prisoner in the cabin—to be about to run off with the *Heavenly Home*. For the life of him, Archie could not take the thing seriously. He chuckled—and chuckled—and chuckled again.

Presently he walked abroad; and in the quaint streets and old customs of the little town, here remote from all the things of the present and of the new world as we know it in this day, he found that which soon lifted him into a dream of times long past and of doughty deeds for honour and a lady. Soft voices in the streets, forms flitting from shadow to shadow, priest and strutting gendarme and veiled lady, gabled roofs, barred windows, low doorways, the clatter of sabots, the pendant street lights, the rumble

of the ten o'clock drums. These things, seen in a mist, were all of the days when bold ventures were made—of those days when a brave man would recover his own, come what might, if it had been wrongfully wrested from him. It was a rare dream—and not broken until he turned into the Quai de la Ronciere.

As he rounded the corner he was almost knocked from his feet by a burly fellow in a Basque cap who was breathless with haste.

"Monsieur—if he will pardon—it was not——" this fellow stammered, apologetically.

Men were hurrying past toward the Café d'Espoir, appearing everywhere from the mist and running with the speed of deep excitement. There was a clamorous crowd about the door—pushing, scuffling, shouting.

"What has happened?" Archie asked in French.

"An American has killed a gendarme, monsieur. A ter-rible fellow! Oh, fear-r-rful!"

"And why—what——"

"He was a ter-rible fellow, monsieur. The gendarmes have been on the lookout for him for three years. And when they laid hands on him he fought, monsieur—fought with the

strength of a savage. It took five gendarmes to bind him—five, monsieur. Poor Louis Arnot! He is dead—killed, monsieur, by a pig of an American with his fist. They are to take the murderer to the jail. I am just now running to warn Deschamps to make ready the dungeon cell. If monsieur will but excuse me, I will ——"

He was off; so Archie joined the crowd at the door of the café, which was that place to which Skipper Bill had repaired to hide. He hung on the outskirts of the crowd, unable to push his way further. The wrath of these folk was so noisy that he could catch no word of what went on within. He devoutly hoped that Skipper Bill had kept to his hiding-place despite the suspicious sounds in the café. Then he wormed his way to the door and entered. A moment later he had climbed on a barrel and was overlooking the squirming crowd and eagerly listening to the clamour. Above every sound—above the cries and clatter and gabble—rang the fighting English of Bill o' Burnt Bay.

It was no American; it was Skipper Bill whom the gendarmes had taken, and he was now so seriously involved, apparently, that his worst enemies could wish him no deeper in the

mesh. They had him bound hand and foot and guarded with drawn swords, fearing, probably, that somewhere he had a crew of wild fellows at his back to make a rescue. To attempt a rescue was not to be thought of. It did not enter the boy's head. He was overcome by grief and terror. He withdrew into a shadow until they had carried Skipper Bill out with a crowd yelping at his heels. Then, white and shaking, he went to a group in the corner where Louis Arnot, the gendarme, was stretched out on the floor.

Archie touched the surgeon on the shoulder. "Is he dead?" the boy asked, in French, his voice trembling.

"No, monsieur; he is alive."

"Will he live?"

"To be sure, monsieur!"

"Is there any doubt about it?" asked Archie.

"Doubt?" exclaimed the surgeon. "With *my* skill, monsieur? It is impossible—he *cannot* die! He will be restored in three days. I—*I*—I will accomplish it!"

"Thank God for that!" thought Archie.

The boy went gravely home to bed; and as he lay down the adventure seemed less romantic than it had.

CHAPTER XVIII

In Which Archie Inspects an Opera Bouffe Dungeon Jail, Where He Makes the Acquaintance of Dust, Dry Rot and Deschamps. In Which, Also, Skipper Bill o' Burnt Bay Is Advised to Howl Until His Throat Cracks

IN the morning Archie went as a tourist to the jail where Bill o' Burnt Bay was confined. The wind was blowing fresh from the west and promised to hold true for the day. It was a fair, strong wind for the outward bound craft; but Archie Armstrong had no longer any interest in the wind or in the *Heavenly Home*. He was interested in captives and cells. To his astonishment he found that the Saint Pierre jail had been designed chiefly with the idea of impressing the beholder, and was builded long, long ago.

It was a low-walled structure situate in a quiet quarter of the town. The outer walls were exceeding thick. One might work with a pick and shovel for a week and never tunnel them.

"But," thought Archie, "why tunnel them when it is possible to leap over them?"

They were jagged on top and strewn with bits of broken bottle imbedded in the mortar.

"But," thought Archie, "why cut one's hands when it is so easy to throw a jacket over the glass and save the pain?"

The walls apparently served no good purpose except to frighten the populace with their frowns.

As big Deschamps, the jailer, led Archie through the musty corridors and cells the boy perceived that the old building had long ago gone to wrack. It was a place of rust and dust and dry rot, of crumbling masonry, of rotted casements, of rust-eaten bars, of creaking hinges and broken locks. He had the impression that a strong man could break in the doors with his fist and tumble the walls about his ears with a push.

"This way, monsieur," said Deschamps, at last. "Come! I will show you the pig of a Newfoundlander who half killed a gendarme. He is a terrible fellow."

He had Skipper Bill safe enough—thrown

into a foul-aired, windowless cell with an iron-bound door, from which there was no escape. To release him was impossible, whatever the condition of the jail in other parts. Archie had hoped to find a way; but when he saw the cell in which Skipper Bill was confined he gave up all idea of a rescue. And at that moment the skipper came to the narrow grating in the door. He scowled at the jailer and looked the boy over blankly.

"Pah!" exclaimed Deschamps, screwing his face into a look of disgust.

"You wait 'til I cotches *you!*" the skipper growled.

"What does the pig say, monsieur?" Deschamps asked.

"He has not yet repented," Archie replied, evasively.

"Pah!" said Deschamps again. "Come, monsieur; we shall continue the inspection."

Archie was taken to the furthermost cell of the corridor. It was isolated from that part of the building where the jailer had his living quarters, and it was a light, roomy place on the ground floor. The window bars were rusted thin and the masonry in which they were sunk

was falling away. It seemed to Archie that he himself could wrench the bars away with his hands; but he found that he could not when he tried them. He looked out; and what he saw made him regret that Skipper Bill had not been confined in that particular cell.

"This cell, monsieur," said Deschamps, importantly, "is where I confine the drunken Newfoundland sailors when ——"

Archie looked up with interest.

"When they make a great noise, monsieur," Deschamps concluded. "I have the headache," he explained. "So bad and so often I have the headache, monsieur. I cannot bear the great noise they make. It is fearful. So I put them here, and I go to sleep, and they do not trouble me at all."

"Is monsieur in earnest?" Archie asked.

Deschamps was flattered by this form of address from a young gentleman. "It is true," he replied. "Compelled. That is the word. I am compelled to confine them here."

"Let us return to the Newfoundlander," said Archie.

"He is a pig," Deschamps agreed, "and well worth looking at."

When they came to the door of Skipper Bill's cell, Archie was endeavouring to evolve a plan for having a word with him without exciting Deschamps' suspicion. The jailer saved him the trouble.

"Monsieur is an American," said Deschamps. "Will he not tell the pig of a Newfoundlander that he shall have no breakfast?"

"Skipper Bill," said Archie, in English, "when I leave here you howl until your throat cracks."

Bill o' Burnt Bay nodded. "How's the wind?" he asked.

"What does the pig of a Newfoundlander say?" Deschamps inquired.

"It is of no importance," Archie replied.

When Archie had inspected the guillotine in the garret, which Deschamps exhibited to every visitor with great pride, the jailer led him to the open air.

"Do the prisoners never escape?" Archie asked.

"Escape!" Deschamps cried, with reproach and indignation. "Monsieur, how could you suggest it? Escape! From me—from *me*, monsieur!" He struck his breast and extended

his arms. "Ah, no—they could not! My bravery, monsieur—my strength—all the world knows of them. I am famous, monsieur. Deschamps, the wrestler! Escape! From *me!* Ah, no—it is *impossible!*"

When Archie had more closely observed his gigantic form, his broad, muscular chest, his mighty arms and thick neck, his large, lowering face—when he had observed all this he fancied that a man might as well wrestle with a grizzly as oppose him, for it would come to the same thing in the end.

"You are a strong man," Archie admitted.

"Thanks—thanks—monsieur!" the delighted Deschamps responded.

At that moment, a long, dismal howl broke the quiet. It was repeated even more excruciatingly.

"The pig of a Newfoundlander!" groaned Deschamps. "My head! It is fearful. He will give me the headache."

Archie departed. He was angry with Deschamps for having called Newfoundlanders pigs. After all, he determined, angrily, the jailer was deserving of small sympathy.

CHAPTER XIX

In Which Archie Armstrong Goes Deeper In and Thinks He Has Got Beyond His Depth. Bill o' Burnt Bay Takes Deschamps By the Throat and the Issue Is Doubtful For a Time

THAT afternoon, after a short conversation with Josiah Cove, who had thus far managed to keep out of trouble, Archie Armstrong spent a brief time on the *Heavenly Home* to attend to the health and comfort of the watchman, who was in no bad way. Perhaps, after all, Archie thought—if Deschamps' headache would only cause the removal of Bill o' Burnt Bay to the dilapidated cell on the ground floor—the *Heavenly Home* might yet be sailed in triumph to Ruddy Cove. He strutted the deck, when necessary, with as much of the insolence of a civic official as he could command, and no man came near to question his right. When the watchman's friends came from the *Voyageur* he drove them away in excellent French. They went meekly and with apologies for having disturbed him.

"So far, well enough," thought Archie, as he rowed ashore, glad to be off the schooner.

It was after dark when, by appointment, the lad met Josiah. Josiah had provided himself with a crowbar and a short length of line, which he said would be sure to come useful, for he had always found it so. Then the two set off for the jail together, and there arrived some time after the drums had warned all good people to be within doors.

"What's that?" said Josiah of a sudden.

It was a hoarse, melancholy croak proceeding from the other side of the wall. The skipper's cell had been changed, as Archie had hoped, and the skipper himself was doing his duty to the bitter end. The street was deserted. They acted quickly. Josiah gave Archie a leg. He threw his jacket over the broken glass and mounted the wall. Josiah made off at once; it was his duty to have the skiff in readiness. Archie dropped into the garden.

"Is that you, b'y?" whispered Skipper Bill.

Again Archie once more found it impossible to take the adventure seriously. He began to laugh. It was far too much like the romances

he had read to be real. It was play, it seemed —just like a game of smugglers and pirates, played on a summer's afternoon.

"Is it you, Archie?" the skipper whispered again.

Archie chuckled aloud.

"Is the wind in the west?" the skipper asked.

"Ay," Archie replied; "and blowing a smart sailing breeze."

"Haste, then, lad!" said the skipper. "'Tis time t' be off for Ruddy Cove."

The window was low. With his crowbar Archie wrenched a bar from its socket. It came with a great clatter. It made the boy's blood run cold to hear the noise. He pried the second and it yielded. Down fell a block of stone with a crash. While he was feeling for a purchase on the third bar Skipper Bill caught his wrist.

"Hist, lad!"

It was a footfall in the corridor. Skipper Bill slipped into the darkness by the door—vanished like a shadow. Archie dropped to the ground. By what unhappy chance had Deschamps come upon this visitation? Could it have been the silence of Skipper Bill? Archie

heard the cover of the grating drawn away from the peep-hole in the door.

"He's gone!"

That was Deschamps' voice. Doubtless he had observed that two bars were missing from the window. Archie heard the key slipped into the lock and the door creak on its hinges. All the time he knew that Skipper Bill was crouched in the shadow—poised for the spring. The boy no longer thought of the predicament as a game. Nor was he inclined to laugh again. This was the ugly reality once more come to face him. There would be a fight in the cell. This he knew. And he waited in terror of the issue.

There was a quick step—a crash—a quick-drawn breath—the noise of a shock—a cry—a groan. Skipper Bill had kicked the door to and leaped upon the jailer. Archie pried the third bar out and broke the fourth with a blow. Then he squirmed through the window. Even in that dim light—half the night light without—he could see that the struggle was over. Skipper Bill had Deschamps by the throat with his great right hand. He had the jailer's waist in his left arm as in a vise, and was forcing his head back

—back—back—until Archie thought the Frenchman's spine would crack.

"Don't kill him!" Archie cried.

Skipper Bill had no intention of doing so; nor had Deschamps, the wrestler, any idea of allowing his back to be broken.

"Don't kill him!" Archie begged again.

Deschamps was tugging at that right arm of iron—weakly, vainly tugging to wrench it away from his throat. His eyes were starting from their sockets, and his tongue protruded. Back went the head—back—back! The arm was pitiless. Back—back! He was fordone. In a moment his strength departed and he collapsed. He had not had time to call for help, so quick had been Bill's hand. They bound his limp body with the length of line Josiah had brought, and they had no sooner bound him than he revived.

"You are a great man, monsieur," he mumbled. "You have vanquished me—Deschamps! You will be famous—famous, monsieur. I shall send my resignation to His Excellency the Governor to-morrow. Deschamps—he is vanquished!"

"What's he talkin' about?" the skipper panted.

"You have beaten him."

"Let's be off, b'y," the skipper gasped.

They locked the door on the inside, clambered through the window and scaled the wall. They sped through the deserted streets with all haste. They came to the landing-place and found the skiff tugging at her painter with her sails all unfurled. Presently they were under way for the *Heavenly Home*, and, having come safely aboard, hauled up the mainsail, set the jib and were about to slip the anchor. Then they heard the clang, clang, clang of a bell—a warning clang, clang, clang, which could mean but one thing: discovery.

"Fetch up that Frenchman," the skipper roared.

The watchman was loosed and brought on deck.

"Put un in his dory and cast off," the skipper ordered.

This done the anchor was slipped and the sheets hauled taut. The rest of the canvas was shaken out and the *Heavenly Home* gathered way and fairly flew for the open sea.

If there was pursuit it did not come within

sight. The old schooner came safely to Ruddy Cove, where Bill o' Burnt Bay, Josiah Cove and Archie Armstrong lived for a time in sickening fear of discovery and arrest. But nothing was ever heard from Saint Pierre. The *Heavenly Home* had been unlawfully seized by the French; perhaps that is why the Ruddy Cove pirates heard no more of the Miquelon escapade. There was hardly good ground in the circumstances for complaint to the Newfoundland government. At any rate, Archie wrote a full and true statement of the adventure to his father in St. John's; and his father replied that his letter had been received and "contents noted."

There was no chiding; and Archie breathed easier after he had read the letter.

CHAPTER XX

In Which David Grey's Friend, the Son of the Factor at Fort Red Wing, Yarns of the Professor With the Broken Leg, a Stretch of Rotten River Ice and the Tug of a White Rushing Current

ONE quiet evening, after sunset, in the early summer, when the folk of Ruddy Cove were passing time in gossip on the wharf, while they awaited the coming of the mail-boat, old David Grey, who had told the tale of McLeod and the tomahawks, called to Billy Topsail and his friends. A bronzed, pleasant-appearing man, David's friend, shook hands with the boys with the grip of a woodsman. Presently he drifted into a tale of his own boyhood at Fort Red Wing in the wilderness far back of Quebec. "You see," said he, "my father had never fallen into the habit of coddling me. So when the lost Hudson Bay Geological Expedition made Fort Red Wing in the spring —every man exhausted, except the young professor, who had broken a leg a month back, and had set it with his own hands—it was the most

natural thing in the world that my father should command me to take the news to Little Lake, whence it might be carried, from post to post, all the way to the department at Ottawa.

"'And send the company doctor up,' said he. 'The little professor's leg is in a bad way, if I know anything about doctoring. So you'll make what haste you can.'

"'Yes, sir,' said I.

"'Keep to the river until you come to the Great Bend. You can take the trail through the bush from there to Swift Rapids. If the ice is broken at the rapids, you'll have to go round the mountain. That'll take a good half day longer. But don't be rash at the rapids, and keep an eye on the ice all along. The sun will be rotting it by day now. It looks like a breakup already.'

"'Shall I go alone, sir?' said I.

"'No, said my father, no doubt perceiving the wish in the question. 'I'll have John go with you for company.'

"John was an Indian lad of my own age, or thereabouts, who had been brought up at the fort—my companion and friend. I doubt if I shall ever find a stancher one.

"With him at my heels and a little packet of letters in my breast pocket, I set out early the next day. It was late in March, and the sun, as the day advanced, grew uncomfortably hot.

"'Here's easy going!' I cried, when we came to the river.

"'Bad ice!' John grunted.

"And it proved to be so—ice which the suns of clear weather had rotted and the frosts of night and cold days had not repaired. Rotten patches alternated with spaces of open water and of thin ice, which the heavy frost of the night before had formed.

"When we came near to Great Bend, where we were to take to the woods, it was late in the afternoon, and the day was beginning to turn cold.

"We sped on even more cautiously, for in that place the current is swift, and we knew that the water was running like mad below us. I was ahead of John, picking the way; and I found, to my cost, that the way was unsafe. In a venture offshore I risked too much. Of a sudden the ice let me through.

"It was like a fall, feet foremost, and when I came again to the possession of my faculties,

with the passing of the shock, I found that my arms were beating the edge of ice, which crumbled before them, and that the current was tugging mightily at my legs.

"'Look out!' I gasped.

"The warning was neither heard nor needed. John was flat on his stomach, worming his way towards me—wriggling slowly out, his eyes glistening.

"Meanwhile I had rested my arms on the edge, which then crumbled no more; but I was helpless to save myself, for the current had sucked my legs under the ice, and now held them securely there, sweeping them from side to side, all the while tugging as if to wrench me from my hold. The most I could do was to resist the pull, to grit my teeth and cling to the advantage I had. It was for John to make the rescue.

"There was an ominous crack from John's direction. When I turned my eyes to look he was lying still. Then I saw him wriggle out of danger, backing away like a crab.

"'John!' I screamed.

"The appeal seemed not to move him. He continued to wriggle from me. When he came to solid ice he took to his heels. I caught sight of

him as he climbed the bank, and kept my eyes upon him until he disappeared over the crest. He had left me without a word.

"The water was cold and swift, and the strength of my arms and back was wearing out. The current kept tugging, and I realized, loath as I was to admit it, that half an hour would find me slipping under the ice. It was a grave mistake to admit it; for at once fancy began to paint ugly pictures for me, and the probabilities, as it presented them, soon flustered me almost beyond recovery.

"'I was chest-high out of the water,' I told myself. 'Chest-high! Now my chin is within four inches of the ice. I've lost three inches. I'm lost!'

"With that I tried to release my feet from the clutch of the current, to kick myself back to an upright position, to lift myself out. It was all worse than vain. The water was running so swiftly that it dangled my legs as it willed, and the rotten ice momentarily threatened to let me through.

"I lost a full inch of position. So I settled myself to wait for what might come, determined to yield nothing through terror or despair. My

eyes were fixed stupidly upon the bend in the river, far down, where a spruce-clothed bluff was melting with the dusk.

"What with the cold and the drain upon my physical strength, it may be that my mind was a blank when relief came. At any rate, it seemed to have been an infinitely long time in coming; and it was with a shock that John's words restored me to a vivid consciousnes of my situation.

"'Catch hold!' said he.

"He had crawled near me, although I had not known of his approach, and he was thrusting towards me the end of a long pole, which he had cut in the bush. It was long, but not long enough. I reached for it, but my hand came three feet short of grasping it.

"John grunted and crept nearer. Still it was beyond me, and he dared venture no farther. He withdrew the pole; then he crept back and unfastened his belt. Working deliberately but swiftly, he bound the belt to the end of the pole, and came out again. He cast the belt within reach, as a fisherman casts a line. I caught it, clutched it, and was hauled from my predicament by main strength.

"'John,' I said, as we drew near to the halfway cabin, 'I know your blood, and it's all very well to be careful not to say too much; but there's such a thing as saying too little. Why didn't you tell me where you were going when you started for that pole?'

"'Huh!' said John, as if his faithfulness to me in every fortune were quite beyond suspicion.

"'Yes, I know,' I insisted, 'but a word or two would have saved me a deal of uneasiness.'

"'Huh!' said he."

CHAPTER XXI

In Which a Bearer of Tidings Finds Himself In Peril of His Life On a Ledge of Ice Above a Roaring Rapid

"WE passed that night at the cabin, where a roaring fire warmed me and dried my clothes," David's friend continued. "My packet of letters was safe and dry, so I slept in peace, and we were both as chirpy as sparrows when we set out the next morning. It was a clear, still day, with the sun falling warmly upon us.

"Our way now led through the bush for mile after mile—little hills and stony ground and swamp-land. By noon we were wet to the knees; but this circumstance was then too insignificant for remark, although later it gave me the narrowest chance for life that ever came within my experience.

"We made Swift Rapids late in the afternoon, when the sun was low and a frosty wind was freezing the pools by the way. The post at Little Lake lay not more than three miles beyond

the foot of the rapids, and when the swish and roar of water first fell upon our ears we hallooed most joyfully, for it seemed to us that we had come within reaching distance of our destination.

"'No,' said John, when we stood on the shore of the river.

"'I think we can,' said I.

"'No,' he repeated.

"The rapids were clear of ice, which had broken from the quiet water above the verge of the descent, and now lay heaped up from shore to shore, where the current subsided at the foot. The water was most turbulent—swirling, shooting, foaming over great boulders. It went rushing between two high cliffs, foaming to the very feet of them, where not an inch of bank was showing. At first glance it was no thoroughfare; but the only alternative was to go round the mountain, as my father had said, and I had no fancy to lengthen my journey by four hours, so I searched the shore carefully for a passage.

"The face of the cliff was such that we could make our way one hundred yards down-stream. It was just beyond that point that the difficulty lay. The rock jutted into the river, and rose sheer from it; neither foothold nor handhold was

offered. But beyond, as I knew, it would be easy enough to clamber along the cliff, which was shelving and broken, and so, at last, come to the trail again.

"'There's the trouble, John,' said I, pointing to the jutting rock. 'If we can get round that, we can go the rest of the way without any difficulty.'

"'No go,' said John. 'Come.'

"He jerked his head towards the bush, but I was not to be easily persuaded.

"'We'll go down and look at that place,' I replied. 'There may be a way.'

"There was a way, a clear, easy way, requiring no more than a bit of nerve to pass over it, and I congratulated myself upon persisting to its discovery. The path was by a stout ledge of ice, adhering to the cliff and projecting out from it for about eighteen inches. The river had fallen. This ledge had been formed when it was at its highest, and when the water had subsided the ice had been left sticking to the rock. The ledge was like the rim of ice that adheres to a tub when a bucketful of freezing water has been taken out.

"I clambered down to it, sounded it, and found

it solid. Moreover, it seemed to lead all the way round, broadening and narrowing as it went, but wide enough in every part. I was sure-footed and unafraid, so at once I determined to essay the passage. 'I am going to try it!' I called to John, who was clinging to the cliff some yards behind and above me. 'Don't follow until I call you.'

"'Look out!' said he.

"'Oh, it's all right,' I said, confidently.

"I turned my back to the rock and moved out, stepping sidewise. It was not difficult until I came to a point where the cliff is overhanging—it may be a space of twelve feet or less; then I had to stoop, and the awkward position made my situation precarious in the extreme, for the rock seemed all the while bent on thrusting me off.

"The river was roaring past. Below me the water was breaking over a great rock, whence it shot, swift and strong, against a boulder which rose above it. I could hear the hiss and swish and thunder of it; and had I been less confident in my foothold, I might then and there have been hopelessly unnerved. There was no mercy in those seething rapids.

"'A fall would be the end of me,' I thought; 'but I will not fall.'

"Fall I did, however, and that suddenly, just after I had rounded the point and was hidden from John's sight. The cold of the late afternoon had frozen my boots stiff; they had been soaked in the swamp-lands, and the water was now all turned to ice.

"My soles were slippery and my feet were awkwardly managed. I slipped.

"My feet shot from under me. A flash of terror went through me. Then I found myself lying on my hip, on the edge of the shelf with my legs dangling over the rapids, my shoulder pressing the cliff, my hands flat on the ice, and my arms sustaining nearly the whole weight of my body.

"At that instant I heard a thud and a splash, as of something striking the water, and turning my eyes, I perceived that a section of the snow ledge had fallen from the cliff. It was not large, but it was between John and me, and the space effectually shut him off from my assistance.

"My problem was to get to my feet again. But how? The first effort persuaded me that it was impossible. My shoulder was against the cliff.

When I attempted to raise myself to a seat on the ledge I succeeded only in pressing my shoulder more firmly against the rock. Wriggle as I would, the wall behind kept me where I was. I could not gain an inch. I needed no more, for that would have relieved my arms by throwing more of my weight upon my hips.

"I was in the position of a boy trying to draw himself to a seat on a window-sill, with the difference that my heels were of no help to me, for they were dangling in space. My arms were fast tiring out. The inch I needed for relief was past gaining, and it seemed to me then that in a moment my arms would fail me, and I should slip off into the river.

"'Better go now,' I thought, 'before my arms are worn out altogether. I'll need them for swimming.'

"But a glance down the river assured me that my chance in the rapids would be of the smallest. Not only was the water swift and turbulent, but it ran against the barrier of ice at the foot of the rapids, and it was evident that it would suck me under, once it got me there.

"Nor was there any hope in John's presence. I had told him to stay where he was until I

called; and, to be sure, in that spot would he stay. I might call now. But to what purpose? He could do nothing to help me. He would come to the gap in the ledge, and from there peep sympathetically at me. Indeed, he might reach a pole to me, as he had done on the day before, but my hands were fully occupied, and I could not grasp it. So I put John out of my mind,—for even in the experience of the previous day I had not yet learned my lesson,—and determined to follow the only course which lay open to me, desperate though it was.

"'I'll turn on my stomach,' I thought, 'and try to get to my knees on the ledge.'

"I accomplished the turn, but in the act I so nearly lost my hold that I lost my head, and there was a gasping lapse of time before I recovered my calm.

"In this change I gained nothing. When I tried to get to my knees I butted my head against the overhanging rock, nor could I lift my foot to the ice and roll over on my side, for the ledge was far too narrow for that. I had altered my position, but I had accomplished no change in my situation. It was impossible for me to rest more of my weight upon my breast than my

hips had borne. My weakening arms still had to sustain it, and the river was going its swirling way below me, just as it had gone in the beginning. I had not helped myself at all.

"There was nothing for it, I thought, but to commit myself to the river and make as gallant a fight for life as I could. So at last I called John, that he might carry our tidings to their destination and return to Fort Red Wing with news of a sadly different kind.

"'Ho!' said John.

"He was staring round the point of rock; and there he stood, unable to get nearer.

"'Ice under,' said he, indicating a point below me. 'More ice. Let down.'

"'What?' I cried. 'Where?'

"'More ice. Down there,' said he. 'Like this. Let down.'

"Then I understood him. Another ledge, such as that upon which I hung, had been formed in the same way, and was adhering to the rock beneath. No doubt there was a pool on the lower side of the point, and just below me, and the current would be no obstacle to the formation of ice. I had looked down from above, and the upper ledge had hidden the lower from me; but

John, standing by the gap in the upper, could see it plainly.

"So I had but to let myself down until my feet rested on the new ledge, and this I did, with extreme caution and the expenditure of the last ounce of strength in my arms. Then a glance assured me that the way was clear to the shelving cliff beyond.

"'You go,' said John. 'I go round.'

"'All right,' said I. 'And, say! I wish I'd called you before.'

"'Ho!' said he, as he vanished.

"When John reached the Little Lake post late that night, the tidings of the safe return of the Hudson Bay Geological Expedition were on the way south by another messenger, and the company's physician was moving over the trail towards Fort Red Wing, making haste to the aid of the young professor, whom, indeed, he soon brought back to health. The passage by the ledge of ice had resulted in a gain of three hours, but whether or not it saved the professor's life I do not know. I do not think it did. It nearly cost me mine, but I had no thought of that when I essayed it, so my experience reflects no credit upon me whatever. I take fewer rash

and reckless chances now on land and water, and I am not so overreliant upon my own resources.

"I have learned that a friend's help is of value."

At that moment the Ruddy Cove mail-boat entered the Tickle.

CHAPTER XXII

In Which Billy Topsail Gets an Idea and, to the Amazement of Jimmie Grimm, Archie Armstrong Promptly Goes Him One Better

WHILE Archie Armstrong was pursuing his piratical adventure in the French harbour of St. Pierre, Billy Topsail had gone fishing with Jimmie Grimm and Donald North. This was in the trim little sloop that Sir Archibald had sent north to Billy Topsail in recognition of his service to Archie during a great blizzard from which Bill o' Burnt Bay had rescued them both.[1] There were now no fish in the summer waters of Ruddy Cove; but word had come down the coast that fish were running in the north. So up went the sails of the little *Rescue;* and with Billy Topsail, Jimmie Grimm and Bobby North aboard she swept daintily between the tickle rocks and turned her shapely prow towards White Bay.

There was good fishing with hook and line;

[1] As related in "The Adventures of Billy Topsail."

and as the hold of the little sloop was small she was soon loaded with green cod.

"I 'low I got an idea," said Billy Topsail.

Jimmie Grimm looked up.

"We'll sail for Ruddy Cove the morrow," Billy went on; "an' when we lands our fish we'll go tradin'. There's a deal o' money in that, I'm told; an' with what we gets for our fish we'll stock the cabin o' the *Rescue* and come north again t' trade in White Bay."

Donald and Jimmie were silent; the undertaking was too vast to be comprehended in a moment.

"Let's have Archie," said Jimmie, at last.

"An' poor ol' Bagg," said Donald.

"We'll have Archie if he'll come," Billy agreed, "an' Bagg if we can stow un away."

There was a long, long silence, during which the three boys began to dream in an amazing way.

"Billy," Donald North asked, at last, "what you goin' t' do with your part o' the money we'll make at tradin'?"

It was a quiet evening on the coast; and from the deck of the sloop, where she lay in harbour, the boys looked away to a glowing sunset, above the inland hills and wilderness.

"I don't know," Billy replied. "What you goin' t' do with your share, Jimmie?"

"Don't know," said Jimmie, seriously. "What you goin' t' do with yours, Donald?"

"I isn't quite made up my mind," said Donald, with an anxious frown. "I 'low I'll wait an' see what Archie does with his."

The three boys stowed away in the little cabin of the *Rescue* very early that night. They were to set sail for Ruddy Cove at dawn of the next morning.

Archie Armstrong, now returned from the Miquelon Islands and relieved of his anxiety concerning that adventure by his father's letter, was heart and soul for trading. But he scorned the little *Rescue*. It was merely that she was too small, he was quick to add; she was trim and fast and stout, she possessed every virtue a little craft could have, but as for trading, on any scale that half-grown boys could tolerate, she was far too small. If a small venture could succeed, why shouldn't a larger one? What Archie wanted—what he determined they should have—was a thirty-ton schooner. Nothing less would do. They must have a thirty-ton fore-

an'-after with Bill o' Burnt Bay to skipper her. The *Heavenly Home?* Not at all! At any rate, Josiah Cove was to take that old basket to the Labrador for the last cruise of the season.

Jimmie Grimm laughed at Archie.

"What you laughing at?" Archie demanded, with a grin.

Jimmie couldn't quite tell; but the truth was that the fisherman's lad could never get used to the airy, confident, masterful way of a rich man's son and a city-bred boy.

"Look you, Archie!" said Billy Topsail, "where in time is you goin' t' get that schooner?"

"The *On Time*," was the prompt reply. "We'll call her the *Spot Cash*."

Billy realized that the *On Time* might be had. Also that she might be called the *Spot Cash*. She had lain idle in the harbour since her skipper had gone off to the mines at Sidney to make more money in wages than he could take from the sea. But how charter her?

"Where you goin' t' get the stock?" Jimmie Grimm inquired.

"Don't know whether I can or not," said Archie; "but I'm going to try my level best."

Archie Armstrong left for St. John's by the

next mail-boat. He was not the lad to hesitate. What his errand was the Ruddy Cove boys knew well enough ; but concerning the prospect of success, they could only surmise. However, Archie wouldn't be long. Archie wasn't the lad to be long about anything. What he undertook to do he went right *at !*

"If he can only do it," Billy Topsail said.

Jimmie Grimm and Donald North and Bagg stared at Billy Topsail like a litter of eager and expectant little puppies. And Bill o' Burnt Bay stood like a wise old dog behind. If only Archie could!

CHAPTER XXIII

In Which Sir Archibald Armstrong Is Almost Floored By a Business Proposition, But Presently Revives, and Seems to be About to Rise to the Occasion

SIR ARCHIBALD ARMSTRONG was a colonial knight. His decoration—one of Her late Majesty's birthday honours—had come to him for beneficent political services to the colony in time of trouble and ruin. He was a Newfoundlander born and bred (though educated in the English schools); and he was fond of saying in a pleasantly boastful way and with a little twinkle of amusement in his sympathetic blue eyes: "I'm a fish-merchant, sir—a Newfoundland fish-merchant!" This was quite true, of course; but it was only half the truth. Directly or indirectly, Sir Archibald's business interests touched every port in Newfoundland, every harbour of the Labrador, the markets of Spain and Portugal, of the West Indies and the South American Republics.

Sir Archibald was alone in his cozy office.

The day was raw and wet. There was a blazing fire in the grate—an agreeable bit of warmth and brightness to contrast with the rain beating on the window-panes.

A pale little clerk put his head in at the door. "Beg pardon, sir," he jerked. "Master Archie, sir."

"Master Archie!" Sir Archibald exclaimed.

Archie entered.

"What's this?" said Sir Archibald, in amazement. "Back from Ruddy Cove?"

"On business," Archie replied.

Sir Archibald laughed pleasantly.

"Don't make fun of me, father," said Archie. "I'm in dead earnest."

"How much is it, son?" This was an ancient joke between the two. Both laughed.

"You'd be surprised if you knew," the boy returned. "But look here, father! please don't take it in that way. I'm really in earnest."

"It's money, son," Sir Archibald insisted. "I know it is."

"Yes," said Archie, with a grave frown; "it *is* money. It's a good deal of money. It's so much money, dad, that you'll sit up when you hear about it."

Sir Archibald looked sharply into his son's grave eyes. "Ahem!" he coughed. "Money," he mused, "and a good deal of it. What's the trouble, son?"

"No trouble, father," said Archie; "just a ripping good chance for fun and profit."

Sir Archibald moved to the chair behind a broad flat-top desk by the window. This was the queer little throne from which all business problems were viewed. It was from the shabby old chair—with a broad window behind—that all business judgments were delivered. Did an outport merchant want credit in any large way, it was from the opposite chair—with the light falling full in his face through the broad window—that he put the case to Sir Archibald. Archie sat down in that chair and leaned over the desk. Sir Archibald stretched his legs, put his hands deep in his pockets, let his chin fall on his breast and stared searchingly into his son's face. The rain was driven noisily against the windows; the fire crackled and glowed. As between the two at the desk there was a momentary silence.

"Well?" said Sir Archibald, shortly.

"I want to go trading," Archie replied.

Sir Archibald lifted his eyebrows—then pursed

his lips. The matter of credit was evidently to be proposed to him. It was to be put, too, it seemed, in a business way. Very well: Sir Archibald would deal with the question in a business way. He felt a little thrill of pleasure —he was quite conscious of it. It was delightful to have his only son in a business discussion, at the familiar old desk, with the fire glowing, the wind rattling the windows and the rain lashing the panes. Sir Archibald was a business man; and now he realized for the first time that Archie was grown to a companionable age. This, after all, he reflected, was what he had been working for: To engage in business with his own son.

"Then you want credit?" said he.

"Look here, dad!" Archie burst out; "of course, I want credit. I'll tell you all about it," he rattled anxiously. "We want—we means Billy Topsail, Jimmie Grimm, Donald North and me—they're all Ruddy Cove fellows, you know—we want to charter the *On Time* at Ruddy Cove, call her the *Spot Cash*, stock her cabin and hold—she's only a twenty-tonner—and ship Bill o' Burnt Bay for skipper and trade the ports of White Bay and the French Shore. All the boys——"

—WE WANT TO CHARTER THE *ON TIME* AND TRADE THE PORTS OF THE FRENCH SHORE."

"My traders," Sir Archibald interrupted, quietly, "are trading White Bay and the French Shore."

"I know it, dad," Archie began eagerly, "but ——"

"Will you compete with them?" Sir Archibald asked, his eyes wide open. "The *Black Eagle* sails north on a trading voyage in a fortnight. She's loading now."

"That's all right," said Archie, blithely. "We're going to ——"

"Encounter harsh competition," Sir Archibald put in, dryly. "How will you go about it?"

Archie had been fidgeting in his chair—hardly able to command his politeness.

"A cash trader!" he burst out.

"Ah!" Sir Archibald drawled, enlightened. "I see. I see-ee!"

"We'll be the only cash trader on the coast, dad," Archie continued; "and we'll advertise—and carry a phonograph—and sell under the credit prices—and ——"

Sir Archibald whistled in chagrin.

"And we'll make good," Archie concluded.

"You little pirate!" Sir Archibald ejaculated.

Father and son laughed together. Then Sir

Archibald began to drum on the desk with his finger-tips. Presently he got up and began to pace the floor, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, his lips pursed, his brows drawn in a scowl of reflection. This was a characteristic thing. Sir Archibald invariably paced, and pursed his lips, and scowled, when a problem of more than ordinary interest engaged him. He knew that Archie's plan was not unreasonable. There *might*—there *ought* to be—good profit in a cash-trading voyage in a small schooner to the harbours of White Bay and the French Shore. There are no shops in most of these little settlements. Shops go to the people in the form of trading-schooners from St. John's and the larger ports of the more southerly coast. It is in this way that the fisher-folk procure their flour and tea, their medicines and clothing, their tackle, their molasses, pins and needles, their trinkets, everything, in fact, both the luxuries and necessities of life. It is chiefly a credit business, the prices based on credit; the folk are outfitted in the spring and pay in salt-cod in the late summer and fall. Why shouldn't a cash-trader, underselling the credit plan, do well on the coast in a small way?

By and by, his face clearing, Sir Archibald sat down at the desk again.

"How much do you want?" he asked, directly.

Archie took a grip on the arms of his chair and clenched his teeth. It took a good deal of resolution to utter the amount.

"Well, well?" Sir Archibald impatiently demanded.

"A thousand dollars," said Archie, grimly.

Sir Archibald started.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars in cash," Archie added, "and seven hundred and fifty in credit at the warehouse."

"What's the security?" Sir Archibald blandly inquired.

"Security!" Archie gasped.

"It is a customary consideration in business," said Sir Archibald.

Archie's house of cards seemed to be tumbling about his ears. Security? He had not thought of that. He began to drum on the desk with his finger-tips. Presently he got up and began to pace the floor, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, his lips pursed, his brow drawn in a scowl of reflection. Sir Archibald, recognizing

his own habit in his son's perturbation, smiled in a fatherly-fond way. The boy was very dear to him; no doubt about it. But Sir Archibald was not sentimental in the affection.

"Well, sir," said Archie, by and by, his face clearing as he sat down, "I could offer you security, and good enough security, but it doesn't seem quite fair."

Sir Archibald asked the nature of the bond.

"I have a pony and cart, a motor boat and a sloop yacht," Archie replied, grinning. "I 'low," he drawled, with a sly drooping of his eyelids, "that they're worth more than a thousand dollars. Eh, father? What do *you* think?"

Sir Archibald guffawed.

"The trouble is," Archie went on, seriously, "that you gave them to me; and it doesn't seem fair to you to offer them as security. But I tell you, dad," he declared, "if we don't make good in this trading cruise I'll sell those things and do without 'em. It isn't fair, I know—it seems pretty mean to you—it looks as if I didn't care for what you've given me. But I do care; and you know I care. The trouble is that I want awfully to go trading."

"It is the only security you have?"

"Except mother," said Archie. "But," he added, hastily, "I wouldn't—I *won't*—drag a lady into this."

Sir Archibald threw back his head and roared.

"What you laughing at, dad?" Archie asked, a little offended, if a quick flush meant anything.

"I'm sure," his father replied, "that the lady wouldn't mind."

"No," said Archie, grave with his little problem of honour; "but I wouldn't let a lady in for a thing like that."

"Son," said Sir Archibald, now all at once turning very serious, "you have better security than your pony and sloop."

Archie looked up in bewilderment.

"It is your integrity," Sir Archibald explained, gently, "and your efficiency."

Archie flushed with pleasure.

"These are great things to possess," said Sir Archibald.

"Thank you, sir," said Archie, rising in acknowledgment of this hearty compliment.

The lad was genuinely moved.

CHAPTER XXIV

In Which the Honour of Archie Armstong Becomes Involved, the First of September Becomes a Date of Utmost Importance, He Collides With Tom Tulk, and a Note is Made in the Book of the Future

SIR ARCHIBALD began again to tap the desk with his finger-tips. Archie strayed to the broad window and looked out upon the wharves and harbour.

"Is that the *Black Eagle* at the wharf?" he asked.

"The *Black Eagle*, sure enough!" Sir Archibald laughed. "She's the White Bay and French Shore trader."

"Trade enough for all," Archie returned.

"George Rumm, master," said Sir Archibald.

"Still?" Archie exclaimed.

The sailing reputation of Skipper George had been in question through the season. He had come within six inches of losing the *Black Eagle* in a small gale of the last voyage.

"Who's clerk?" Archie asked.

"Tommy Bull, boy."

No friend of Archie!

"Sharp enough, anyhow," the boy thought.

Sir Archibald put his hands in his pockets again and began to pace the floor; his lips were pursed, his brows drawn. Archie waited anxiously at the window.

"When," demanded Sir Archibald, pausing abruptly in his walk—"when do you propose to liquidate this debt?"

"We'll sail the *Spot Cash* into St. John's harbour, sir, on September first, or before."

"With three hundred quintals of fish in her hold, I suppose?"

Three hundred quintals of dry fish, at four dollars, roughly, a quintal, was twelve hundred dollars.

"More than that, sir," said Archie.

"Well, boy," said Sir Archibald, briskly, "the security I have spoken of is all right, and——"

"Not worth much at auction sale," Archie interrupted, grinning.

"There's no better security in the world," said Sir Archibald, "than youth, integrity and capacity."

Archie waited.

"I'll back you," said Sir Archibald, shortly.

"Father," Archie declared, his eyes shining with a little mist of delight and affection, "I'll stand by this thing for all I'm worth!"

They shook hands upon it.

Sir Archibald presently wrote a check and scribbled a few lines on a slip of paper. The check was for two hundred and fifty dollars; it was for running expenses and emergencies that Archie needed the hard cash. The slip of paper was an order upon the warehouses and shops for credit in the sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars.

"Now," said Sir Archibald, "it is explicitly understood between us that on or before the first of September you are to turn over to the firm of Armstrong & Company a sufficient quantity of properly cured fish to liquidate this account."

"Yes, sir," Archie replied, earnestly; "on or before the first day of September next."

"You perfectly understand the terms?" Sir Archibald insisted. "You know the nature of this obligation?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, son," said Sir Archibald; "your honour is involved."

Archie received the two slips of paper. It must be confessed that they burned his fingers a little. It was a good deal to come into possession of all at once—a good deal of money and an awe-inspiring responsibility. Sir Archibald watched the boy's face narrowly. He seemed to be pleased with what he found there—a little fear, a little anxiety, a great deal of determination. The veteran business man wondered if the boy would sleep as easily as usual that night. Would he wake up fresh and smiling in the morning? These were large cares to lie upon the shoulders of a lad.

"Shall I give you a—well—a receipt—or a note—or anything like that?" Archie asked.

"You are upon your honour," said his father.

Archie scratched his head in doubt.

"Your honour," Sir Archibald repeated, smiling.

"The first of September," Archie laughed. "I shan't forget that date."

In the end he had good cause to remember it.

Before Archie left the office Sir Archibald led him to the broad window behind the desk. Archie was used to this. It was his father's

habit. The thing was not done in a spirit of boasting, as the boy was very well aware. Nor was it an attempt to impress the boy with a sense of his own importance and future wealth in the world. It was rather a well-considered and consistent effort to give him a sense of the reality and gravity of the obligations that would some day be his. From the broad window Archie looked out once more upon the various activities of his father's great business. There were schooners fitting out for the fishing cruise to the Labrador; there were traders taking in stores for the voyage to the Straits of Belle Isle, to the South Coast, to the French Shore; there were fore-and-afters outbound to the Grand Banks and waiting for a favourable wind; there were coastwise vessels, loading flour and pork for the outport merchants; there were barques awaiting more favourable weather in which to load salt-cod for the West Indies and Spain.

All this never failed to oppress Archie a little as viewed from the broad window of his father's office.

"Look!" said Sir Archibald, moving a hand to include the shipping and storehouses.

Archie gazed into the rainy day.

"What do you see?" his father asked, in a way half bantering, half grave.

"Your ships and wharves, sir."

"Some day," said Sir Archibald, "they will be yours."

"I wish you wouldn't say that, dad—at least, not just in that way," said Archie, turning away from the window. "It sort of frightens me."

Sir Archibald laughed and clapped him on the back. "You know what I mean," said he.

"You mean that the firm has a name," said Archie. "You mean that the name must never be disgraced. I know what you mean."

Sir Archibald nodded.

"I hope," said Archie, the suspicion of a quaver in his voice and a tremble in his lower lip, "that I'll never disgrace it."

"Nor the name of the little firm that goes into business this day," said Sir Archibald.

Archie's solemn face broke into a smile of amusement and surprise. "Why, dad," said he, "it hasn't got a name."

"Armstrong & Company, Junior?"

"Armstrong, Topsail, Grimm & Company," said Archie, promptly.

"Good luck to it!" wished Sir Archibald.

"No; that's not it at all," said Archie. "Billy Topsail schemed this thing out. Wish luck to the firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company."

"Build the firm," said Sir Archibald, "upon hard work and fair play."

Archie hurriedly said they would—and vanished.

"Son is growing up," thought Sir Archibald, when the boy had gone. "Son is decidedly growing up. Well, well!" he sighed; "son is growing up and in far more trouble than he dreams of. It's a big investment, too. However," he thought, well pleased and cheerful again, "let him go ahead and learn his daddy's business. And I'll back him," he declared, speaking aloud in his enthusiastic faith. "By Jove! I'll back him to win!"

At the foot of the stairway Archie collided full tilt with two men who were engaged in intimate conversation as they passed the door. The one was George Rumm, skipper of the *Black Eagle* —a timid, weak-mouthed, shifty-eyed man, with an obsequious drawl in his voice, a diffident manner, and, altogether, a loose, weak way. The other was old Tom Tulk of Twillingate. Archie

leaped back with an apology to Skipper George. The boy had no word to say to Tom Tulk of Twillingate. Tom Tulk was notoriously a rascal whom the law was eager to catch but could never quite satisfactorily lay hands on. It did not occur to Archie that no wise skipper would put heads mysteriously together in a public place with old Tom Tulk of Twillingate. The boy was too full of his own concerns to take note of anything.

"Hello, Skipper George!" he cried, buoyantly. "I'll see you on the French Shore."

"Goin' north?" Skipper George drawled.

"Tradin'," said Archie.

Skipper George started. Tom Tulk scowled. "Goin' aboard the *Black Eagle?*" asked Skipper George.

"Tradin' on my own hook, Skipper George," said Archie; "and I'm bound to cut your throat on the Shore."

Tom Tulk and Skipper George exchanged glances as Archie darted away. There was something of relief in Skipper George's eyes—a relieved and teasing little smile. But Tom Tulk was frankly angry.

"The little shaver!" said he, in disgust.

It was written in the book of the future that Skipper George Rumm and Archie Armstrong should fall in with each other on the north coast before the summer was over.

CHAPTER XXV

In Which Notorious Tom Tulk o' Twillingate and the Skipper of the "Black Eagle" Put Their Heads Together Over a Glass of Rum in the Cabin of a French Shore Trader

THERE was never a more notorious rascal in Newfoundland than old Tom Tulk of Twillingate. There was never a cleverer rascal—never a man who could devise new villainies as fast and execute them as neatly. The law had never laid hands on him. At any rate not for a crime of importance. He had been clapped in jail once, but merely for debt; and he had carried this off with flying colours by pushing past the startled usher in church and squatting his great flabby bulk in the governor's pew of the next Sunday morning. He was a thief, a chronic bankrupt, a counterfeiter, an illicit liquor seller. It was all perfectly well known; but not once had a constable brought an offense home to him. He had once been arrested for theft, it is true, and taken to St. John's by the constables; but on the way he

had stolen a watch from one and put it in the pocket of the other, thereby involving both in far more trouble than they could subsequently involve him.

Add to these evil propensities a deformed body and a crimson countenance and you have the shadow of an idea of old Tom Tulk.

George Rumm and Tom Tulk boarded the *Black Eagle* in the rain and sought the shelter of her little cabin. The cook had made a fire for the skipper; the cabin was warm and quiet. Tom Tulk closed the door with caution and glanced up to see that the skylights were tight. Skipper George produced the bottle and glasses.

"Now, Skipper George," said Tom Tulk, as he tipped the bottle, "'tis a mint o' money an' fair easy t' make."

"I'm not likin' the job," the skipper complained. "I'm not likin' the job at all."

"'Tis an easy one," Tom Tulk maintained, "an' 'tis well paid when 'tis done."

Skipper George scowled in objection.

"Ye've a soft heart for man's work," said Tom, with a bit of a sneer.

Skipper George laughed. "Is you thinkin' t' drive me by makin' fun o' me?" he asked.

"I'm thinkin' nothin'," Tom Tulk replied, "but t' show you how it can be done. Will you listen t' me?"

"Not me!" George Rumm declared.

Tom Tulk observed, however, that the skipper's ears were wide open.

"Not me!" Skipper George repeated, with a loud thump on the table. "No, sir! I'll have nothin' t' do with it!"

Tom Tulk fancied that the skipper's ears were a little bit wider than before; he was not at all deceived by this show of righteousness on the part of a weak man.

"Well, well!" he sighed. "Say no more about it."

"I'm not denyin'," said Skipper George, "that it *could* be done. I'm not denyin' that it would be easy work. But I tells you, Tom Tulk, that I'll have nothin' t' do with it. I'm an honest man, Tom Tulk, an' I'd thank you t' remember it."

"Well, well!" Tom Tulk sighed again. "There's many a man in this harbour would jump at the chance; but there's never another sc honest that I could trust him."

"Many a man, if you like," Skipper George growled; "but not me."

"No, no," Tom Tulk agreed, with a covert little sneer and grin; "not you."

"'Tis a prison offense, man!"

"If you're cotched," Tom Tulk laughed. "An' tell me, George Rumm, is *I* ever been cotched?"

"I'm not sayin' you is."

"No; nor never will be."

It had all been talked over before, of course; and it would be talked over again before a fortnight was past and the *Black Eagle* had set sail for the French Shore with a valuable cargo. Tom Tulk had begun gingerly; he had proceeded with exquisite caution; he had ventured a bit more; at last he had come boldly out with the plan. Manned with care—manned as she could be and as Tom Tulk would take care to have her—the *Black Eagle* was the ship for the purpose; and Skipper George, with a reputation for bad seamanship, was the man for the purpose. And the thing *would* be easy. Tom Tulk knew it. Skipper George knew it. It could be successfully done. There was no doubt about it; and Skipper George hated to

think that there was no doubt about it. The ease and safety with which he might have the money tumble into his pocket troubled him. It was not so much a temptation as an aggravation. He found himself thinking about it too often; he wanted to put it out of his mind, but could not.

"Now, Tom Tulk," said he, at last, flushing angrily, "let's have no more o' this. I'm fair tired of it. I'll have nothin' t' do with it; an' I tells you so, once an' for all."

"Pass the bottle," said Tom Tulk.

The bottle went from hand to hand.

"We'll say no more about it," said Tom Tulk; "but I tells you, Skipper George, that that little clerk o' yours, Tommy Bull, is just the ticket. As for a crew, I got un handy."

"Belay, belay!"

"Ay, ay, Skipper George," Tom Tulk agreed; "but as for fetchin' a cargo o' fish into St. John's harbour without tellin' where it came from, if there's any man can beat me at that, why, I'd ——"

Skipper George got up and pulled open the hatch.

"I'll see you again," said Tom Tulk.

Skipper George of the *Black Eagle* helped himself to another dram when Tom Tulk had withdrawn his great body and sly face. It was true, all that Tom Tulk had said. It was true about the clerk; he was ripe to go bad. It was true about the crew; with hands scarce, and able-bodied young fellows bound to the Sidney mines for better wages, Skipper George could ship whom he liked and Tom Tulk chose. It was true about fetching fish into St. John's without accounting whence it came. Tom Tulk could do it; nobody would ask eccentric old Tom Tulk where he got his fish—everybody would laugh. It was true about the skipper himself; it was quite true that his reputation was none of the best as a sailing-master. But he had never lost a ship yet. They might say he had come near it, if they liked; but he had never lost a ship yet. No, sir; he had never lost a ship yet. Nor would he. He'd fetch the *Black Eagle* home, right enough, and *show* Sir Archibald Armstrong!

But the thing would be easy. It was disgustingly easy in prospect. Skipper George wished that old Tom Tulk had never come near to bother him.

"Hang Tom Tulk!" thought he.

But how easy, after all, the thing would be!

The first hand put his head in the hatchway to tell Skipper George that he was to report to Sir Archibald Armstrong in the office at once. Skipper George was not quite easy about the three drams he had taken; but there was nothing for it but to appear in the office without delay. As a matter of fact Sir Archibald Armstrong detected nothing out of the way. He had something to say to Skipper George about the way to sail a schooner—about timid sailing, and reckless sailing, and feeling about in fogs, and putting out to sea, and running for harbour. When he had finished—and he spoke long and earnestly, with his blue eyes flashing, his head in the air, his teeth snapping once in a while—when Sir Archibald had finished, Skipper George was standing with his cap in his hand, his face flushed, answering, "Yes, sir," and, "No, sir," in a way of the meekest. When he left the office he was unpleasantly aware that he was face to face with his last chance. In this new trouble he forgot all about Tom Tulk.

"Skipper George," he thought, taking counsel

with himself, as he poured another dram, "you got t' do better."

He mused a long time.

"I *will* do better," he determined. "I'll show un that I can sail a schooner."

Before he stowed away for the night, a little resentment crept into his thoughts of Sir Archibald. He had never felt this way before.

"I got t' stop this," he thought.

Tom Tulk was then dreaming over a glass of rum; and his dreams were pleasant dreams—concerning Skipper George of the *Black Eagle*.

CHAPTER XXVI

In Which the Enterprise of Archie Armstrong Evolves Señor Fakerino, the Greatest Magician In Captivity. In Which, also, the Foolish are Importuned Not to be Fooled, Candy is Promised to Kids, Bill o' Burnt Bay is Persuaded to Tussle With "The Lost Pirate," and the "Spot Cash" Sets Sail

FOR three dismal, foggy days, Archie Armstrong was the busiest business man in St. John's, Newfoundland. He was forever damp, splashed with mud, grimy-faced, wilted as to clothes and haggard as to manner. But make haste he must; there was not a day—not an hour—to spare: for it was now appallingly near August; and the first of September would delay for no man. When, with the advice of Sir Archibald and the help of every man-jack in the warehouses (even of the rat-eyed little Tommy Bull), the credit of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company had been exhausted to the last penny, Archie sighed in a thoroughly self-satisfied way, pulled out his new check-book and plunged into work of another sort.

"How's that bank-account holding out?" Sir Archibald asked, that evening.

"I'm a little bit bent, dad," Archie replied, "but not yet broke."

Sir Archibald looked concerned.

"Advertising," Archie briefly explained.

"But," said Sir Archibald, in protest, "nobody has ever advertised in White Bay before."

"Somebody is just about to," Archie laughed.

Sir Archibald was puzzled. "Wh-wh-what *for?*" he inquired. "What kind of advertising?"

"Handbills, dad, and concerts, and flags, and circus-lemonade."

"Nothing more, son?" Sir Archibald mocked.

"Señor Fakerino," Archie replied, with a smack of self-satisfaction, "the World's Greatest Magician."

"The same being?"

"Yours respectfully, A. Armstrong."

Sir Archibald shrugged his shoulders. Then his eyes twinkled, his sides began to shake, and he threw back his head and burst into a roar of laughter, in which Archie and his mother—they were all at dinner—joined him.

"Why, dad," Archie exclaimed, with vast enthusiasm, "the firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company is going to give the people of White Bay such a good time this summer that

they'll never deal with anybody else. And we're going to give them the worth of their money, too —every penny's worth. On a cash basis we can afford to. We're going into business to build up a business; and when I come back from that English school next summer it's going to go right ahead."

Sir Archibald admitted the good prospect.

"Pity the poor *Black Eagle!*" said Archie, grinning.

Lady Armstrong finished Señor Fakerino's gorgeously spangled crimson robe and high-peaked hat that night and Archie completed a very masterpiece of white beard. Afterwards, Archie packed his trunks. When he turned in at last, outward bound next day by the cross-country mixed train, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had stowed the phonograph, the printing-press and type, the signal flags, the magical apparatus and Fakerino costume and the new accordion; and he knew—for he had taken pains to find out—that the stock of trading goods, which he had bought with most anxious discrimination, was packed and directed and waiting at the station, consigned to Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company, General Merchants, Ruddy Cove, Newfoundland.

Archie slept well.

When the mail-boat made Ruddy Cove, Archie was landed, in overflowing spirits, with his boxes and bales and barrels and trunks and news. The following days were filled with intense activity. Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company chartered the *On Time* in due form; and with the observance of every legal requirement she was given a new name, the *Spot Cash.* They swept and swabbed her, fore and aft; they gave her a line or two of gay paint; they fitted her cabin with shelves and a counter and her forecastle with additional bunks; and Bill o' Burnt Bay went over her rigging and spars. While Jimmie Grimm, Bobby North and Bagg unpacked the stock and furnished the cabin shelves and stowed the hold, Billy Topsail and Archie turned to on the advertising.

The printing-press was set up in Mrs. Skipper William's fish-stage. Billy Topsail—who had never seen the like—stared open-mouthed at the operation.

"We got to *make* 'em buy," Archie declared.

"H-h-how?" Billy stammered.

"We got to make '*em want* to," said Archie. "They'll trade if they want to."

In return Billy watched Archie scribble.

"How's this?" Archie asked, at last.

Billy listened to the reading.

"Will that fetch 'em aboard?" Archie demanded, anxiously.

"It would *my* mother," said the astonished Billy. "*I'd* fetch her, bet yer life!"

They laboriously set up the handbill and triumphantly struck it off:

kANDY FOR KIdS

×

Boys Girls and Babies come Aboard the

"sPOT CAsH"

You Get Perfectly Pure Peppermint if you bring your

:o: PARENTS :o:

WE LOVE KIDs KIdDIES AND KiDLETS

Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Co.

"That'll fetch 'em, all right!" Archie declared. "Now for the concert."

Billy had another shock of surprise. "Th-th *what?*" he ejaculated.

"Concert," Archie replied. "You're going to sing, Billy."

"Me!" poor Billy exclaimed in large alarm.

"And Skipper Bill is, too," Archie went on; "and Bagg's going to double-shuffle, and Bobby North is going to shake that horn-pipe out of his feet, and Jimmy Grimm is going to recite 'Sailor Boy, Sailor Boy,' and I'm going to do a trifling little stunt myself. I'm Señor Fakerino, Billy," Archie laughed, "the Greatest Magician in Captivity. *Just* you wait and see. I think I'll have a bill all to myself."

Archie scowled and scribbled again with a result that presently made him chuckle. It appeared in the handbill (after some desperately hard work) in this guise:

tO-NIGHT! tO-NIGHT!
On Board the
"SPOT CASH"
—— SENOR FAKE-erino ——
Will Fully Fool the Foolish
:o: DOn'T :o:
Be Foolish and Fully Fooled by
Credit Trading
TRADE FOR CASH **
ABOARD *the*
** "SPOT CASH"

It was late in the afternoon before the last handbill was off the press; and Billy Topsail then looked more like a black-face comedian than senior member of the ambitious firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company. Archie was no better—perspiring, ink-stained, tired in head and hands. But the boys were delighted with what they had accomplished. There were two other productions: one announcing the concert and the other an honest and quiet comparison of cash and credit prices with a fair exposition of the virtue and variety of the merchandise to be had aboard the *Spot Cash*.

When Bill o' Burnt Bay, however, was shown the concert announcement and informed, much to his amazement, that it was down in the articles of agreement, as between him, master of the *Spot Cash*, and the firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company—down in black and white in the articles of agreement which he was presumed to have signed—down and no dodging it—that he was to sing "The Lost Pirate" when required—Bill o' Burnt Bay was indignant and flatly resigned his berth.

"All right, skipper," Archie drawled. "You needn't sing, I 'low. Billy Topsail has a sweet

little pipe, an' I 'low it'll be a good deal better to have him sing twice."

"Eh?" Bill gasped, chagrined. "What's that?"

"Better to have Billy sing twice," Archie repeated indifferently.

Bill o' Burnt Bay glared at Billy Topsail.

"Billy Topsail," said Archie, in a way the most careless, "has the neatest little pipe on the coast."

"I'll have you to know," Bill o' Burnt Bay snorted, "that they's many a White Bay liveyere would pay a *dime* t' hear me have a tussle with 'The Lost Pirate.'"

Archie whistled.

"Look you, Archie!" Skipper Bill demanded; "is you goin' t' let me sing, or isn't you?"

"I is," Archie laughed.

That was the end of the mutiny.

At peep of dawn the *Spot Cash* set sail from Ruddy Cove with flags flying and every rag of sail spread to a fair breeze. Presently the sun was out, the sky blue, the wind smartly blowing. Late in the afternoon she passed within a stone's throw of Mother Burke and rounded Cape John

into White Bay. Before dark she dropped anchor in Coachman's Cove and prepared for business.

"Come on, lads!" Archie shouted, when the anchor was down and all sail stowed. "Let's put these dodgers where they'll do most good."

The handbills were faithfully distributed before the punts of Coachman's came in from the fishing grounds; and that night, to an audience that floated in punts in the quiet water, just beyond the schooner's stern, and by the light of four torches, Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company presented their first entertainment in pursuit of business, the performers operating upon a small square stage which Bill o' Burnt Bay had rigged on the house of the cabin.

It was a famous evening.

CHAPTER XXVII

In Which the Amazing Operations of the "Black Eagle" Promise to Ruin the Firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company, and Archie Armstrong Loses His Temper and Makes a Fool of Himself

TRADE was brisk next day—and continued brisk for a fortnight. From Coachman's Cove to Seal Cove, from Seal Cove to Black Arm, from Black Arm to Harbour Round and Little Harbour Deep went the *Spot Cash*. She entered with gay signal flags and a multitude of little Union Jacks flying; and no sooner was the anchor down than the phonograph began its musical invitation to draw near and look and buy. And there was presently candy for the children; and there were undeniable bargains for the mothers. In the evening—under a quiet starlit sky—Skipper Bill "tussled" gloriously with "The Lost Pirate," and Bobby North shook the hornpipe out of his very toes, and Bill Topsail wistfully piped the well-loved old ballads of the coast in a tender treble; and after that Señor Fakerino created no end of

SEÑOR FAKERINO CREATED APPLAUSE BY EXTRACTING HALF DOLLARS FROM VACANCY.

mystification and applause by extracting half-dollars from the vacant air, and discovering three small chicks in an empty top-hat, and producing eggs at will from Bagg's capacious mouth, and with a mere wave of his wand changing the blackest of ink into the very most delicious of lemonade. The folk of that remote coast were delighted. They had never been amused before; and they craved amusement—like little children.

Trade followed as a matter of course.

Trade was brisk as any heart could wish up the White Bay coast to the first harbours of the northern reaches of the French Shore; and there it came to an appalling full stop. The concerts were patronized as before; but no fish came aboard for exchange.

"I can't bear to look the calendar in the face," Archie complained.

The *Spot Cash* then lay at anchor in Englee.

"'Tis the fifth o' August," said Billy Topsail.

"Whew!" Archie whistled. "Sixteen days to the first of September!"

"What's the matter, anyhow?" Skipper Bill inquired.

"The *Black Eagle's* the matter," said Archie,

angrily. "She's swept these harbours clean. She cleaned out Englee yesterday."

"Stand by, all hands!" roared the skipper.

"What's up, skipper?" asked Archie.

"Nothin'," replied the skipper; "that's the trouble. But the mains'l *will* be up afore very long if there's a rope's end handy," he added. "We'll chase the *Black Eagle*."

They caught the *Black Eagle* at anchor in Conch that evening. She was deep in the water. Apparently her hold was full; there were the first signs of a deck-load of fish to be observed. In a run ashore Archie very soon discovered the reason of her extraordinary success. He returned to the deck of the *Spot Cash* in a towering rage. The clerk of the *Black Eagle* had put up the price of fish and cut the price of every pound and yard of merchandise aboard his vessel. No wonder she had loaded. No wonder the folk of the French Shore had emptied their stages of the summer's catch. And what was the *Spot Cash* to do? Where was she to get *her* fish? By selling at less than cost and buying at more than the market price? Nothing of the sort! Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company were not going to be ruined by that sort of folly. Topsail, Arm-

strong, Grimm & Company couldn't *have* any fish. The powerful firm of Armstrong & Company of St. John's was going to put the poor little firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company out of business—going to snuff 'em out—*had* snuffed 'em out. The best thing Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company could do was to get to cover and call cash trading as big a failure as had ever been made in Newfoundland business.

"Isn't fair!" Archie complained, aboard the *Spot Cash*. "It's dirty business, I tell you."

"Let's fire away, anyhow," said Jimmie Grimm.

"It isn't fair of dad," Archie repeated, coming as near to the point of tears as a boy of his age well could. "It's a low trick to cut a small trader's throat like this. They can outsail us and keep ahead of us; and they'll undersell and overbuy us wherever we go. When they've put us out of business, they'll go back to the old prices. It isn't fair of dad," he burst out. "I tell you, it isn't fair!"

"Lend a hand here," said Bill. "We'll see what they do."

A pretense of hauling up the mainsail was

made aboard the *Spot Cash*. There was an immediate stir on the deck of the *Black Eagle;* the hands were called from the forecastle.

"Look at that!" said Archie, in disgust.

Both crews laughed and gave it up.

"It isn't *like* your dad," said Bill o' Burnt Bay. "I'll lay you alongside the *Black Eagle*, Archie," he added, "an' you can have a little yarn with Skipper George."

Skipper George Rumm was glad to see Archie—glad in a too bland way, in which, however, Archie did not detect a very obvious nervousness. Three eighty-five for fish? Yes; the skipper *did* believe that Tommy Bull was paying three eighty-five. No; he didn't know the market price in St. John's. Flour and pork and sugar and tea? No; the skipper didn't know just what Tommy Bull was selling flour and pork and sugar and tea at. You see, Tommy Bull was clerk of the *Black Eagle;* and that was the clerk's business. Tommy Bull was ashore just then; the skipper didn't just quite know when he'd come aboard. Were these prices Sir Archibald's orders? Really, Skipper George didn't know. Tommy Bull knew all

about that; and Tommy Bull had clerked in these waters long enough to keep the firm's business to himself. Tommy Bull was close-mouthed; he wouldn't be likely to blab Sir Archibald's orders in every harbour of the coast or whisper them in the ear of a rival trading clerk.

This last thrust was too much for Archie's dignity. He leaped from the deck of the *Black Eagle* into his own punt in a greater rage than ever.

"There's t' be a spell o' rough weather," were Skipper George's last words.

The punt moved away.

"Skipper Bill," said Archie, "the nearest telegraph station is at Tilt Cove. Can we make it in a night?"

"If the wind holds," the skipper answered.

"Then we'll try," said Archie.

The predicament was explained to Donald North and Jimmy Grimm and Billy Topsail. The *Spot Cash* could have no more fish as long as the *Black Eagle* paid three eighty-five with the St. John's market at three thirty-five. But *was* the market at three thirty-five? Hadn't the *Black Eagle* later information? That must be

found out; and from Tilt Cove it could be discovered in two hours. So up went the sails of the *Spot Cash*, and, with the *Black Eagle* following, she jockeyed out of the harbour. Presently, when she had laid a course for Cape John and Tilt Cove, the *Black Eagle* came about and beat back to Conch.

Next morning—and dirty weather was promised for the day—the *Spot Cash* dropped anchor in the shelter of the cliff at Tilt Cove and Billy Topsail pulled Archie ashore. It was in Archie's heart to accuse his father's firm of harsh dealing with a small competitor; but he resolved to do no more than ask the price of fish. The answer would be significant of all that the lad wished to know; and if the great firm of Armstrong & Company had determined to put obstacles in the way of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company, even to the point of ruin, there was no help for Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company. Archie would ask no quarter.

"Make haste!" Skipper Bill called from the deck of the *Spot Cash*. "I've no love for this harbour in a gale o' wind."

It was poor shelter at best.

"Much as I can," Archie shouted back.

The boy sent this telegram:

Tilt Cove, August 6.

Armstrong & Company,
St. John's.
Price of fish.
Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company.

There was now nothing to do but wait. Sir Archibald would be in his little office overlooking his wharves and shipping. It would not be long. And the reply presently came:

St. John's, August 6.

Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company,
Aboard "Spot Cash,"
Tilt Cove.
Still three thirty-five. No rise probable.
Armstrong & Company.

Archie Armstrong was hurt. He could hardly conceive that his father had planned the ruin of his undertaking and the loss of his honour. But what was left to think? Would the skipper and clerk of the *Black Eagle* deliberately court discharge? And discharge it would be—discharge in disgrace. There was no possible excuse for this amazing change in prices. No; there was no explanation but that they were proceeding upon Sir Archibald's orders. It was inconceiv-

able that they should be doing anything else. Archie would ask no quarter of his father; but he would at least let Sir Archibald know that he was aware of the difference between fair and unfair competition. Before he boarded the *Spot Cash* he dispatched this message:

Tilt Cove, August 6.

Armstrong & Company,
St. John's.

"Black Eagle" paying three eighty-five. Undersselling flour, pork, tea, sugar. Why don't you play fair?

Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company.

If Archie Armstrong could have been in the little office which overlooked the wharves to observe the effect of that message upon Sir Archibald he would not only have been amazed but would have come to his senses in a good deal less time than he actually did. The first item astounded and bewildered Sir Archibald; the second—the brief expression of distrust—hurt him sorely. But he had no time to be sentimental. Three eighty-five for fish? What was the meaning of that? Cut prices on flour, pork, sugar and tea? What was the meaning of *that?* Sir Archibald saw in a flash what it meant to Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Com-

pany. But what did it mean to Armstrong & Company? Sir Archibald flushed and perspired with wrath. He pushed buttons—he roared orders—he scribbled telegrams. In ten minutes, so vociferous was his rage, so intense his purpose, it was known from one end of the establishment to the other that the *Black Eagle* must be communicated with at once.

But Armstrong & Company could not manage to communicate with the *Black Eagle* direct, it seemed. Armstrong & Company might, however, communicate with the *Spot Cash*, now at Tilt Cove and possibly bound north. Doubtless by favour of the clerk of the *Spot Cash* Armstrong & Company would be able to speak orders in the ear of Skipper George Rumm.

"Judd!" Sir Archibald roared.

The pale little clerk appeared on the bound.

"Rush this," said Sir Archibald.

The message read:

St. John's, August 6.

Archibald Armstrong II,
On board "Spot Cash,"
Tilt Cove.

Please oblige order "Black Eagle" St. John's forthwith. This your authority.

Armstrong & Company.

CHAPTER XXVIII

In Which the "Spot Cash" is Caught By a Gale In the Night and Skipper Bill Gives Her Up For Lost

IT was blowing up when Archie returned to the *Spot Cash*. There was a fine rain in the wind, too; and a mist—hardly yet a fog—was growing denser on the face of a whitening sea. Nothing to bother about yet, of course: only a smart breeze and a little tumble, with thick weather to make a skipper keep his eyes open. But there was the threat of heavy wind and a big sea in gray sky overhead and far out upon the water. Tilt Cove was no place for the *Spot Cash* to lie very long; she must look for shelter in Sop's Arm before night.

"Archie, b'y," said Bill o' Burnt Bay, in the cozy forecastle with the boys, "there's something queer about this here *Black Eagle*."

"I should say so!" Archie sneered. "It's the first time I ever knew my father not to play fair."

"Bosh!" Skipper Bill ejaculated.

Archie started up in a rage.

"'Ear the wind!" said Bagg, with a little shiver.

It had begun to blow in earnest. The wind, falling over the cliff, played mournfully in the rigging. A gust of rain lashed the skylight. Swells from the open rocked the schooner.

"Blowin' up," said Billy Topsail.

"How long have you knowed Sir Archibald?" the skipper asked.

Archie laughed.

"Off an' on for about sixteen years, I 'low?" said the skipper.

Archie nodded shortly.

"'Ark t' the wind!" Bagg whispered.

"'Twill be all in a tumble off the cape," said Jimmie Grimm.

"Know Sir Archibald *well?*" the skipper pursued.

Archie sat down in disgust.

"Pretty intimate, eh?" asked the skipper.

The boy laughed again; and then all at once —all in a flash—his ill-humour and suspicion vanished. His father not play fair? How preposterous the fancy had been! Of *course*, he

was playing fair! But somebody wasn't. And *who* wasn't?

"It is queer," said he. "What do you make of it, Bill?"

"I been thinkin'," the skipper replied heavily.

"Have you fathomed it?"

"Well," the skipper drawled, "I've thunk along far enough t' want t' look into it farder. I'd say," he added, "t' put back t' Conch."

"It's going to blow, Skipper Bill."

It had already begun to blow. The wind was moaning aloft. The long-drawn melancholy penetrated to the cozy cabin. In the shelter of the cliff though she was, the schooner tossed in the spent seas that came swishing in from the open.

"Well," the skipper drawled, "I guess the wind won't take the hair off a body; an' I 'low we can make Conch afore the worst of it."

"I'm with the skipper," said Billy Topsail.

"Me, too," said Jimmie Grimm.

Bagg had nothing to say; he seldom had, poor fellow! in a gale of wind.

"I've a telegram to send," said Archie.

It was a message of apology. Archie went ashore with a lighter heart to file it. What an

unkindly suspicious fool he had been! he reflected, heartily ashamed of himself.

"Something for you, sir," said the agent.

Sir Archibald's telegram was put in the boy's hand; and when this had been read aboard the *Spot Cash*—and when the schooner had rounded Cape John and was taking full advantage of a sudden change of wind to the southwest—Archie and the skipper and the crew felt very well indeed, thank you!

It blew hard in the afternoon—harder than Bill o' Burnt Bay had surmised. The wind had a slap to it that troubled the little *Spot Cash*. Crested seas broke over her bows and swept her deck. She was smothered in white water half the time. The wind was rising, too. It was to be a big gale from the southeast. It was already half a gale. There was wind enough for the *Spot Cash*. Much more would shake and drown her like a chip. Bill o' Burnt Bay, at the wheel, and the crew, forward and amidships, kept watch for the coast and the friendly landmarks of harbour. But what with wind and fog and rain it was a disheartening business.

When night gathered, the coast was not in

sight. The *Spot Cash* was tossing somewhere offshore in a rising gale and dared not venture in. The wind continued in the southeast. The coast was a lee shore—all rocks and islands and cliffs. The *Spot Cash* must beat out again to sea and wait for the morning. Any attempt to make a harbour of that harsh shore in the dark would spell destruction. But the sea was hardly more hospitable. The *Spot Cash*, reefed down almost to bare poles, and standing out as best she could, tossed and plunged in the big black seas, with good heart, to be sure, but, presently, with small hope. It seemed to Bill o' Burnt Bay that the little craft would be broken and swamped.

The boys came aft from forward and amidships. All at once Archie, who had been staring into the night ahead, started, turned and uttered an ejaculation of dismay, which a gust of wind drove into the skipper's ear.

"What is it, b'y?" Skipper Bill roared.

"I forgot to insure her," shouted Archie.

Skipper Bill grinned.

"It's ruin if we wreck, Bill," Archie shouted again.

It looked to Bill o' Burnt Bay like wreck and death. If so, the ruin might take care of itself.

It pleased him to know that Archie was still unconcerned about his life. He reflected that if the *Spot Cash* should by any chance survive he would tell Sir Archibald that story. But a great sea and a smothering blast of wind distracted him. The sea came clear over the bow and broke amidships; the wind fairly drove the breath back into the skipper's throat. There would be two more seas he knew: there were always three seas. The second would break in a moment; the third would swamp the schooner. He roared a warning to the boys and turned the wheel to meet the sea bow on. The big wave fell with a crash amidships; the schooner stopped and shivered while a torrent of water drove clear over the stern. Bill o' Burnt Bay saw the crest of the third sea grow white and tower in the night.

"Hang to her!" screamed Archie.

Skipper Bill smiled grimly as the sea came aboard. It broke and swept past. He expected no more; but more came—more and still more. The schooner was now tossing in a boiling pot from which the spray rose like steam. Bill caught the deep boom of breakers. The *Spot Cash* was somewhere inshore. The water was

shallowing. She was fairly on the rocks. Again Bill shouted a warning to the boys to save themselves when she struck. He caught sight of a low cliff—a black shadow above a mass of moving, ghostly white. The schooner was lifted by a great sea and carried forward. Skipper Bill waited for the shock and thud of her striking. He glanced up at the spars—again screamed a warning—and stood rigid. On swept the schooner. She was a long time in the grip of that great wave.

Then she slipped softly out of the rough water into some placid place where the wind fluttered gently down from above.

There was a moment of silence and uttermost amazement. The wind had vanished; the roar of the sea was muffled. The schooner advanced gently into the dark.

"The anchor!" the skipper gasped.

He sprang forward, stumbling; but it was too late: the bowsprit crumpled against a rock, there was a soft thud, a little shock, a scraping, and the *Spot Cash* stopped dead.

"We're aground," said Bill.

"I wonders where?" said Jimmie Grimm.

"In harbour, anyhow," said Billy Topsail.

"And no insurance!" Archie added.

There was no levity in this. The boys were overawed. They had been afraid, every one of them; and the mystery of their escape and whereabouts oppressed them. But they got the anchor over the bow; and presently they had the cabin stove going and were drying off. Nobody turned in; they waited anxiously for the first light of day to disclose their surroundings.

CHAPTER XXIX

In Which Opportunity is Afforded the Skipper of the "Black Eagle" to Practice Villainy in the Fog and He Quiets His Scruples. In Which, also, the Pony Islands and the Tenth of the Month Come Into Significant Conjunction

ABOARD the *Black Eagle*, Skipper George Rumm and Tommy Bull, with the cook and three hands, all of Tom Tulk's careful selection, were engaged, frankly among themselves, in a conspiracy to wreck the schooner for their own profit. It was a simple plan; and with fortune to favour rascality, it could not go awry. Old Tom Tulk of Twillingate had conceived and directed it. The *Black Eagle* was to be loaded with salt-cod from the French Shore stages in haste and at any cost. She was then to be quietly taken off one of the out-of-the-way rocky little islands of the remote northern coast. Her fish and the remainder of her cargo were to be taken ashore and stowed under tarpaulin: whereupon—with thick weather to corroborate a tale of wreck—the schooner was to be scuttled in deep water.

"'Tis but a matter o' clever management," Tom Tulk had said. "Choose your weather—that's all."

Presently the castaways were to appear in Conch in the schooner's quarter boat with a circumstantial account of the disaster. The *Black Eagle* was gone, they would say; she had struck in a fog, ripped out her keel (it seemed), driven over the rock, filled and sunk. At Conch, by this time, the mail-boat would be due on the southward trip. Skipper George and the clerk would proceed in grief and humiliation to St. John's to report the sad news to Armstrong & Company; but the cook and the three hands would join Tom Tulk at Twillingate, whence with the old reprobate's schooner they would rescue fish and cargo from beneath the tarpaulins on the out-of-the-way rocky little island in the north. To exchange crews at Twillingate and run the cargo to St. John's for quick sale was a small matter.

"Barrin' accident," Tom Tulk had said, "it can't fail."

There, indeed, was a cold, logical plan. "Barrin' accident," as Tom Tulk was aware, and as he by and by persuaded Skipper George, it

could not fail. Let the weather be well chosen, the story consistent: that was all. Was not Skipper George forever in danger of losing his schooner? Had not Sir Archibald already given him his last warning? They would say in St. John's merely that Skipper George had "done it at last." Nobody would be surprised; everybody would say, "I told you so." And when old Tom Tulk came into harbour with a mysterious load of fish who would suspect him? Was not Tom Tulk known to be an eccentric? Was there any accounting for what Tom Tulk would do? Tom Tulk would say, "Mind your business!" and that would make an end of the questioning.

"Choose your weather, Skipper George," said Tom Tulk. "Let it be windy and thick."

With fog to hide the deed—with a gale to bear out the story and keep prying craft away—there would be small danger of detection. And what if folk did suspect? Let 'em prove it! *That's* what the law demanded. Let 'em *prove* it!

When the *Black Eagle* put back to Conch from following the little *Spot Cash*, it was evident that the opportunity had come. The weather

was thick; there was a promise of wind in the air. Moreover, with Archie Armstrong on the coast in a temper, it was the part of wisdom to beware. Skipper George went gloomily to the cabin when the schooner rode once more at anchor. It was time, now; he knew it, the clerk knew it, the crew knew it. But Skipper George had no liking for the job; nor had the clerk, to tell the truth, nor had the cook, nor had the crew. Rascals are not made in a day; and it takes a long time to innure them against fear and self-reproach. But skipper and crew of the *Black Eagle* were already committed. Their dealing for fish on the coast had been unpardonable. The skipper could not explain it in St. John's; nor could the clerk excuse it.

"We got t' go through with this, Tommy," said the gloomy skipper.

"Have a dram," the clerk replied. "I'm in sore need o' one meself."

It seemed the skipper was, too.

"With that little shaver on the coast," said the clerk, "'tis best done quickly."

"I've no heart for it," the skipper growled.

The clerk's thin face was white and drawn. His hand trembled, now, as he lifted his glass.

Nor had *he* any heart for it. It had been all very well, at first; it had seemed something like a lark—just a wild lark. The crew, too, had taken it in the spirit of larking—at first. But now that the time was come both forecastle and cabin had turned uneasy and timid.

In the forecastle, the cook said to the first hand:

"Wisht I was out o' this."

"Wisht I'd never come in it," the first hand sighed.

Their words were in whispers.

"I 'low," said the second hand, with a scared glance about, "that the ol' man will—will *do* it —the morrow."

The three averted their eyes—each from the other's.

"I 'low," the cook gasped.

Meantime, in the cabin, the clerk, rum now giving him a saucy outlook, said: "'Twill blow half a gale the morrow."

"Ay," said the skipper, uneasily; "an' there's like t' be more than half a gale by the glass."

"There'll be few craft out o' harbour."

"Few craft, Tommy," said the skipper, drawing a timid hand over his bristling red

beard. "I'm not likin' t' take the *Black Eagle* t' sea."

"'Tis like there'll be fog," the clerk continued.

"Ay; 'tis like there'll be a bit o' fog."

Skipper and clerk helped themselves to another dram of rum. Why was it that Tom Tulk had made them a parting gift? Perhaps Tom Tulk understood the hearts of new-made rascals. At any rate, skipper and clerk, both simple fellows, after all, were presently heartened.

Tommy Bull laughed.

"Skipper," said he, "do you go ashore an' say you'll take the *Black Eagle* t' sea the morrow, blow high or blow low, fair wind or foul."

The skipper looked up in bewilderment.

"Orders," the clerk explained, grinning. "Tell 'em you've been wigged lively enough by Sir Archibald for lyin' in harbour."

Skipper George laughed in his turn.

"For'ard, there!" the clerk roared, putting his head out of the cabin. "One o' you t' take the skipper ashore!"

Three fishing-schooners, bound down from the Labrador, had put in for safe berth through a threatening night. And with the skippers of

these craft, and with the idle folk ashore, Skipper George foregathered. Dirty weather? (the skipper declared); sure, 'twas dirty weather. But there was no wind on that coast could keep the *Black Eagle* in harbour. No, sir: no wind that blowed. Skipper George was sick an' tired o' bein' wigged by Sir Archibald Armstrong for lyin' in harbour. No more wiggin' for *him*. No, sir! He'd take the *Black Eagle* t' sea in the mornin'? Let it blow high or blow low, fair wind or foul, 'twould be up anchor an' t' sea for the *Black Eagle* at dawn. Wreck her? Well, let her *go* t' wreck. Orders was orders. If the *Black Eagle* happened t' be picked up by a rock in the fog 'twould be Sir Archibald Armstrong's business to explain it. A sfor Skipper George, no man would be able t' tell *him* again that he was afraid t' take his schooner t' sea. An' orders was orders, sir. Yes, sir; orders was orders.

"I'm not likin' the job o' takin' my schooner t' sea in wind an' fog," Skipper George concluded, with a great assumption of indignant courage; "but when I'm told t' drive her, *I'll drive*, an' let the owner take the consequences."

This impressed the Labrador skippers.

"Small blame t' you, Skipper George," one declared, "if you do lose her."

Well satisfied with the evidence he had manufactured to sustain the story of wreck, Skipper George returned to the schooner.

"Well," he drawled to the clerk, "I got my witnesses. They isn't a man ashore would put t' sea the morrow if the weather comes as it promises."

The clerk sighed and anxiously frowned. Skipper George, infected by this melancholy and regret—for the skipper loved the trim, fleet-footed, well-found *Black Eagle*—Skipper George sighed, too.

"Time t' turn in, Tommy," said he.

The skipper had done a good stroke of business ashore. Sir Archibald had indeed ordered him to "drive" the *Black Eagle*.

And in the rising wind of the next day while the *Spot Cash* lay at anchor in Tilt Cove and Archie's messages were fleeting over the wire to St. John's—the *Black Eagle* was taken to sea. Ashore they advised her skipper to stick to shelter; but the skipper would have none of their warnings. Out went the *Black Eagle* under

shortened sail. The wind rose; a misty rain gathered; fog came in from the far, wide open. But the *Black Eagle* sped straight out to sea. Beyond the Pony Islands—a barren, out-of-the-way little group of rocks—she beat aimlessly to and fro: now darting away, now approaching. But there was no eye to observe her peculiar behaviour. Before night fell—driven by the gale—she found poor shelter in a seaward cove. Here she hung grimly to her anchorage through the night. Skipper and crew, as morning approached, felt the wind fall and the sea subside.

Dawn came in a thick fog.

"What do you make of it, Tommy?" the skipper asked.

The clerk stared into the mist. "Pony Islands, skipper, sure enough," said he.

"Little Pony or Big?"

In a rift of the mist a stretch of rocky coast lay exposed.

"Little Pony," said the clerk.

"Ay," the skipper agreed: "an' 'twas Little Pony, easterly shore," he added, his voice dwindling away, "that Tom Tulk advised."

"An' about the tenth o' the month," Tommy Bull added.

CHAPTER XXX

In Which the Fog Thins and the Crew of the "Spot Cash" Fall Foul of a Dark Plot

MORNING came to the *Spot Cash*, too —morning with a thick mist: morning with a slow-heaving sea and a vanished wind. Bill o' Burnt Bay looked about —stared in every direction from the listed little schooner—but could find no familiar landmark. They were in some snug harbour, however, of a desolate and uninhabited coast. There were no cottages on the hills; there were no fish-flakes and stages by the waterside. Beyond the tickle —that wide passage through which the schooner had driven in the dark—the sea was heaving darkly under the gray mist. Barren, rugged rock fell to the harbour water; and rocky hills, stripped of verdure by the winds of a thousand years, hid their bald heads in the fog.

"I don't know what it *is*," said Bill o' Burnt Bay to the boys; "but I know well enough what it *ought* t' be."

"'Tis never the Shore," Billy Topsail declared.

"I'm 'lowin'," said Skipper Bill, but yet doubtfully, "that 'tis one o' the Pony Islands. They lies hereabouts," he continued, scratching his head, "long about thirty mile off the mainland. We're on a westerly shore, and that means Islands, for we've never come t' the westerly coast o' Newfoundland. If I could get a peep at the Bald-head I could tell for certain."

The grim landmark called the Bald-head, however,—if this were indeed one of the Pony Islands—was in the mist.

"I'll lay 'tis the Pony Islands," Billy Topsail declared again.

"It may be," said the skipper.

"An' Little Pony, too," Billy went on. "I mind me now that we sheltered in this harbour in the *Fish Killer* afore she was lost on Feather's Folly." [1]

"I 'low *'tis*," Skipper Bill agreed.

Whether the Pony Islands or not—and whether Big Pony or Little Pony—clearing weather would disclose. Meantime, as Archie Armstrong somewhat tartly pointed out, the *Spot Cash* was to be looked to. She had gone aground at low tide,

[1] As related in "The Adventures of Billy Topsail."

it seemed; and she was now floating at anchor, free of the bottom The butt of her bowsprit had been driven into the forecastle; and the bowsprit itself had gone permanently out of commission. Otherwise she was tight and ready. The practical-minded Archie Armstrong determined, with a laugh, that notwithstanding the loss of a bowsprit the firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company would not have to go out of business for lack of insurance. And after an amazingly hearty and hilarious breakfast, which Bagg, the cook—Bagg *was* the cook—presently announced, the folk of the *Spot Cash* went ashore to take observations.

"We'll rig a bowsprit o' some sort," Bill o' Burnt Bay remarked, "afore the fog lifts."

The fog was already thinning.

Meantime, on the easterly coast of the Little Pony, the *Black Eagle* was being warped in towards shore and moored with lines to a low, sheer rock, which served admirably as a landing wharf. The gangplank was run out, the hatches were lifted, the barrows were fetched from below; and all these significant operations were directed in a half-whisper by the rat-eyed little Tommy

Bull. Ashore went the fish—ashore by the barrow-load—and into a convenient little gully where the tarpaulins would keep it snug against the weather. Fortune favoured the plan: fog hid the island from the sight of all men. But the faces of the crew grew longer as the work advanced; and the voice of the rat-eyed little clerk fell lower, and his manner turned still more furtive, and his hand began to shake.

In the cabin the skipper sat, with an inspiring dram, engaged in melancholy and apprehensive brooding. Armstrong & Company had not served him ill, after all (thought he); but, pshaw! the *Black Eagle* was insured to the hilt and would be small loss to the firm. Well, well! she was a tight little schooner and had many a time taken the evil fall weather with a stout heart. 'Twas a pity to scuttle her. Scuttle her? The skipper had much rather scuttle Tom Tulk! But pshaw! after all 'twould but make more work for Newfoundland ship-builders. Would it never be known? Would the murder never out? Could Tommy Bull and the crew be trusted? The skipper had already begun to fear Tommy Bull and the crew. He had caught himself deferring to the cook.

To the cook!

"Pah!" thought the skipper, as he tipped his bottle, "George Rumm knucklin' down to a cook! A pretty pass t' come to!"

Tommy Bull came down the ladder. "Skipper, sir," said he, "you'd best be on deck."

Skipper George went above with the clerk.

"She's gettin' light," said Tommy Bull.

At that moment the skipper started. With a hoarse ejaculation leaping from his throat he stared with bulging eyes towards the hills upon which a shaft of sunlight had fallen. Then he gripped Tommy Bull by the arm.

"Who's that?" he whispered.

"What?" the terrified clerk exclaimed. "Who's what, man? Where—where? What you talkin' about?"

The skipper pointed to the patch of sunlight on the hills. "That!" he gasped.

"'Tis a man!" said the clerk.

"We're cotched!" the skipper groaned.

The rat-like little clerk bared his teeth.

Bill o' Burnt Bay and the boys of the *Spot Cash* had seen what the lifting fog disclosed—the *Black Eagle* moored to the rocks of the Little Pony and

unloading. But they had not fathomed the mystery. A mystery it was, however, and a deep one. To solve it they came down the hill towards the schooner in a body and were presently face to face with skipper and clerk on the deck. The crew went on with the unloading; there was never a hint of hesitation or embarrassment. And the skipper of the *Spot Cash* was serenely made welcome. Whatever rat-like impulse to bite may have been in the heart of the little clerk, when Bill o' Burnt Bay came over the crest of the hill, it had now vanished in descreet politeness. There was no occasion for biting. Had there been—had the crew of the *Black Eagle* been caught in the very act of scuttling the ship—Tommy Bull would no doubt have driven his teeth in deep. Even amateur scoundrels at bay may be highly dangerous antagonists. These were amateur scoundrels, to be sure, and good-hearted in the main; but they were not yet by any means at bay.

"Jus' a little leak, Skipper Bill," Skipper George explained, when Bill o' Burnt Bay had accounted for his presence in Little Pony. "Sprung it in the gale."

"Did you, now?" said Skipper Bill, suspi-

ciously; "'tis lucky we happened along. I'm a bit of a carpenter, meself, an' I'd ——"

"Not at all!" Skipper George protested, with a large wave of the hand. "*Not* at all!"

"'Twould be no trouble ——"

"Not at all!" Skipper George repeated. "Here's Tommy just found the spot, an' we'll plug it in short order."

Skipper Bill could ill conceal his suspicion.

"You're in trouble yourself with the *Spot Cash*, says you," said Skipper George. "We'll lend you a spar an' a couple o' hands t' set it."

"We'll buy the spar," Archie put in.

Skipper George laughed heartily. "Well, well," said he. "Have it your own way. You make your repairs, an' I'll make mine; an' then we'll see who's back t' the Shore ports first."

Archie bethought himself.

"I'll lay you," Skipper George went on, clapping Archie on the back, "that you'll not find a fish in the harbours where the *Black Eagle* goes."

"You're ordered home, Skipper George," said Archie. "I've this message from Tilt Cove."

Skipper George glanced at the telegram. "Well, well!" said he, blandly; "we're nigh loaded, anyhow."

Archie wondered afterwards why Skipper George had caught his breath and lost some of his colour.

Presently the crew of the *Spot Cash*, with two stout hands from the *Black Eagle*, went over the hills with the spare spar. Skipper George and Tommy Bull made haste to the cabin.

"Ordered home," said the skipper, slapping the message on the counter.

"Forthwith," Tommy Bull added.

"There's more here than appears," the anxious skipper went on. "Tommy," said he, gravely, "there's something back o' this."

The clerk beat a devil's tattoo in perturbation.

"There's more suspected than these words tell," the skipper declared.

"'Tis by sheer good luck, Skipper George," said the clerk, "that we've a vessel t' take home. I tell you, b'y," said he, flushing with suspicion and rage, "I don't trust Tom Tulk. He'd sell his mother for a slave for a thousand dollars."

"Tom Tulk!" Skipper George exclaimed. "By thunder!" he roared, "Tom Tulk has blowed!"

For the second time that day the rat-like little clerk of the *Black Eagle* bared his teeth—now with a little snarl.

"They've no proof," said the skipper.

"True," the clerk agreed; "but they's as many as two lost jobs aboard this vessel. They'll be two able-bodied seamen lookin' for a berth when the *Black Eagle* makes St. John's."

"Well, Tommy Bull," said the skipper, with a shrug, "'tis the clerk that makes prices aboard a tradin' schooner; and 'twill be the clerk that will explain in this particular case."

"Huh!" Tommy Bull sneered.

Next day the *Black Eagle*, with her fish again aboard, put to sea and sped off on a straight course for St. John's. Notwithstanding the difficulties in store, clerk and skipper were in good humour with all the world (except Tom Tulk); and the crew was never so light-hearted since the voyage began. But as the day drew along—and as day by day passed—and as the home port and Sir Archibald's level eyes came ever nearer—the skipper grew troubled. Why should the *Black Eagle* have been ordered home? Why had Sir Archibald used that mysterious and unusual word "forthwith" with such em-

phasis? What lay behind the brusque order? Had Tom Tulk played false? Would there be a constable on the wharf? With what would Sir Archibald charge the skipper? Altogether, the skipper of the *Black Eagle* had never sailed a more disquieting voyage. And when the *Black Eagle* slipped through the narrows to St. John's harbour he was like a dog come home for a thrashing.

CHAPTER XXXI

In Which the "Spot Cash" is Picked up by Blow-Me-Down Rock In Jolly Harbour, Wreckers Threaten Extinction and the Honour of the Firm Passes into the Keeping of Billy Topsail

THE *Spot Cash* made for the French Shore with all the speed her heels could command. The seventh of August! How near it was to the first of September! The firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company, with the skipper and cook, shivered to think of it. Ten more trading days! Not another hour could they afford if the *Spot Cash* would surely make St. John's harbour on the specified day. And she would—she must—Archie declared. His honour was involved—the honour of them all—of the firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company. Had not Sir Archibald said so?

So in the harbours of the Shore Bill o' Burnt Bay once more tussled valiantly with "The Lost Pirate," and the flags flew, and the phonograph ground out inviting music, and Bobby North

shook the hornpipe out of his active toes, and Bagg double-shuffled, and the torches flared, and "Kandy for Kids" and "Don't be Foolish and Fully Fooled" persuaded the populace, and Signor Fakerino created mystification, and Billy Topsail employed his sweet little pipe most wistfully in the old ballad of the coast:

"Sure, the chain 'e parted,
An' the schooner drove ashore,
An' the wives of the 'ands
Never saw un any more,
No more!
Never saw un any mo-o-o-re!"

It was all to good purpose. Trade was even brisker than in White Bay. Out went the merchandise and in came the fish. Nor did the *Spot Cash* once leave harbour without a hearty, even wistful, invitation to return. Within seven days, so fast did the fish come aboard, the hold had an appearance of plethora. Jimmie Grimm and Bagg protested that not another quintal of fish could be stowed away. It was fairly time to think of a deck-load. There was still something in the cabin: something to be disposed of—something to turn into fish. And it was Archie who proposed the scheme of riddance.

"A bargain sale," said he. "The very thing."

"An' Jolly Harbour's the place," said the skipper.

"Then homeward bound!" shouted Archie.

They ran into Jolly Harbour on the wings of a brisk southerly wind—and unfortunately in the dusk brought up hard and fast on Blow-Me-Down Rock.

Aground! They were hard and fast aground on Blow-Me-Down Rock in Jolly Harbour at high tide. A malignant sea made a certainty of it. It lifted the *Spot Cash*—drove her on—and gently deposited her with a horrifying list to starboard. Archie Armstrong wrung his hands and stamped the deck. Where was the first of September now? How was the firm to—to—what was it Sir Archibald had said?—yes; how was the firm to "liquidate its obligations" on the appointed day and preserve its honour?

"By gettin' the *Spot Cash* afloat," said Skipper Bill, tersely.

"And a pretty time we'll have," groaned Archie.

"I 'low," Bill drawled, "that we may be in for a prettier time still."

"Sure, it couldn't be worse," Billy Topsail declared.

"This here," Bill explained, "is Jolly Harbour; an' the folk o' Jolly Harbour isn't got no reputations t' speak of."

This was hardly enlightening.

"What I means," Skipper Bill went on, "is that the Jolly Harbour folk is called wreckers. They's been a good deal o' talk about wreckers on this coast; an' they's more lies than truth in it. But Jolly Harbour," he added, "is Jolly Harbour; an' the folk will sure come swarmin' in punts and skiffs an' rodneys when they hear they's a vessel gone ashore."

"Sure, they'll give us help," said Billy Topsail.

"Help!" Skipper Bill scornfully exclaimed. "'Tis little help *they'll* give us. Why, b'y, when they've got her cargo, they'll chop off her standing rigging and draw the nails from her deck planks."

"'Tis a mean, sinful thing to do!" cried Billy.

"They live up to their lights, b'y," the skipper said. "They're an honest, good-hearted, God-fearin' folk on this coast in the main; but they believe that what the sea casts up belongs to men who can get it, and neither judge nor preacher

can teach them any better. Here lies the *Spot Cash*, stranded, with a wonderful list t' starboard. They'll think it no sin to wreck her. I know them well. 'Twill be hard to keep them off once they see that she's high and dry."

Archie began to stamp the deck again.

When the dawn broke it disclosed the situation of the schooner. She was aground on a submerged rock, some distance offshore, in a wide harbour. It was a wild, isolated spot, with spruce-clad hills, which here and there showed their rocky ribs rising from the edge of the water. There was a cluster of cottages in a ravine at the head of the harbour; but there was no other sign of habitation.

Evidently the schooner's deep list betrayed her distress; for when the day had fully broken, a boat was pushed off from the landing-place and rowed rapidly towards her.

"Here's the first!" muttered Skipper Bill. "I'll warn him well."

He hailed the occupant, a fisherman with a simple, good-humoured face, who hung on his oars and surveyed the ship.

'Keep off, there!" shouted the skipper. "We

need no man's help. I warn you an' your mates fair not to come aboard. You've no right here under the law so long as there's a man o' the crew left on the ship, and I'll use force to keep you off."

"You're not able to get her off, sir," said the fisherman, rowing on, as if bent on boarding. "She's a wreck."

"Billy," the skipper ordered, "get forward with a gaff and keep him off."

With that the fisherman turned his punt about and made off for the shore.

"Aye, aye, Billy!" he called, good-naturedly. "I'll give you no call to strike me."

"He'll come back with others," the skipper remarked, gloomily. "'Tis a bad lookout."

"We'll try to haul her off with the punt," suggested Archie.

"With the punt!" the skipper laughed. "'Twould be as easy to haul Blow-Me-Down out by the roots. But if we can keep the wreckers off, by trick or by force, we'll not lose her. The *Grand Lake* passed up the coast on Monday. She'll be steamin' into Hook-and-Line again on Thursday. As she doesn't call at Jolly Harbour we'll have t' go fetch her. We can run

over in the punt an' fetch her. 'Tis a matter o' gettin' there and back before the schooner's torn t' pieces."

At dawn of the next day Skipper Bill determined to set out for Hook-and-Line to intercept the steamer. In the meantime there had been no sign of life ashore. Doubtless, the crew of the *Spot Cash* thought, the news of the wreck was on its way to neighbouring settlements. The wind had blown itself out; but the sea was still running high, and five hands (three of them boys) were needed to row the heavy schooner's punt through the lop and distance. Muscle was needed for the punt; nothing but wit could save the schooner. Who should stay behind?

"Let Archie stay behind," said Billy Topsail.

"No," Skipper Bill replied; "he'll be needed t' bargain with the captain o' the *Grand Lake*."

There was a moment of silence.

"Billy," said the skipper, "you'll stay."

Billy nodded shortly.

"Now, Billy Topsail," Skipper Bill went on, "I fear you've never read the chapter on 'Wreck an' Salvage' in the 'Consolidated Statutes o' Newfoundland.' So I'm going t' tell you some things you don't know. Now, listen careful!

By law, b'y," tapping the boy on the breast with a thick, tarry finger, "if they's nobody aboard a stranded vessel—if she's abandoned, as they say in court—the men who find her can have her and all that's in her. That's pretty near the law o' the land—near enough for you, anyway. Contrary, by law, b'y," with another impressive tap, "if they is one o' the crew aboard, he's a right to shoot down any man who comes over the side against his will. That's *exactly* the law. Do you follow?"

"But I've no mind for shootin' at so good-natured a man," said Billy, recalling the fisherman's broad grin.

"An' I hope you won't have to," said the skipper. "But they's no harm in aiming an empty gun anywhere you've a mind to. So far as I know, they's no harm in firin' away a blast or two o' powder if you forget t' put in the shot."

Billy laughed.

"Billy, boy," said Archie, tremulously, "it's up to you to save the firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company."

"All right, Archie," said Billy.

"I *know* it's all right," Archie declared.

"They's just two things to remember," said

the skipper, from the bow of the punt, before casting off. "The first is to stay aboard; the second is to let nobody else come aboard if you can help it. 'Tis all very simple."

"All right, skipper," said Billy.

"Topsail — Armstrong—Grimm—*and*—Company," were the last words Billy Topsail heard; and they came from Archie Armstrong.

CHAPTER XXXII

In Which the "Grand Lake" Conducts Herself In a Most Peculiar Fashion to the Chagrin of the Crew of the "Spot Cash"

SKIPPER BILL and the punt of the stranded *Spot Cash* made the harbour at Hook-and-Line in good season to intercept the *Grand Lake*. She was due—she would surely steam in—that very day, said the men of Hook-and-Line. And it seemed to Archie Armstrong that everything now depended on the *Grand Lake*. It would be hopeless—Skipper Bill had said so and the boys needed no telling—it would be hopeless to attempt to get the *Spot Cash* off Blow-Me-Down Rock in an unfriendly harbour without the steamer's help.

"'Tis fair hard t' believe that the Jolly Harbour folk would give us no aid," said Jimmie Grimm.

Skipper Bill laughed. "You've no knowledge o' Jolly Harbour," said he.

"'Tis a big expense these robbers are putting us to," Archie growled.

"Robbers?" Bill drawled. "Well, they're a

decent, God-fearin' folk, with their own ideas about a wreck."

Archie sniffed.

"I've no doubt," the skipper returned, "that they're thankin' God for the windfall of a tradin' schooner at family worship in Jolly Harbour at this very minute."

This view expressed small faith in the wits of Billy Topsail.

"Oh, Billy Topsail will stand un off," Jimmie Grimm stoutly declared.

"I'm doubtin' it," said the frank skipper.

"Wh-wh-*what!*" Archie exclaimed in horror.

"I'm just doubtin' it," the skipper repeated.

This was a horrifying confession; and Archie Armstrong knew that Skipper Bill was not only wise in the ways of the French Shore but was neither a man to take a hopeless view nor one needlessly to excite anxiety. When Bill o' Burnt Bay admitted his fear that Billy Topsail had neither the strength nor the wit to save the *Spot Cash* from the God-fearing folk of Jolly Harbour, he meant more than he said. The affairs of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company seemed to be in a bad way. It was now more than a mere matter of liquidating an obligation on the first of

September; the problem was of liquidating it at all.

"Wisht the *Grand Lake* would 'urry up," said Bagg.

"I'd like t' save some splinters o' the schooner, anyway," the skipper chuckled, in a ghastly way, "even if we *do* lose the cargo."

It occurred all at once to Archie Armstrong that Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company were not only in obligation for the debt to Armstrong & Company but were responsible for a chartered craft which was not insured.

"A thousand dollars—a cold thousand dollars —*and* the *Spot Cash!*" he exclaimed, aghast.

"Wisht she'd 'urry up," Bagg repeated.

Archie, pacing the wharf, his hands deep in his pockets, his face haggard and white, recalled that his father had once told him that many a man had been ruined by having too large a credit. And Archie had had credit—much credit. A mere boy with a thousand dollars of credit! With a thousand dollars of credit in merchandise and coin and the unquestioned credit of chartering a schooner! He realized that it had been much—too much. Somehow or other, as he feverishly paced the wharf at

Hook-and-Line, the trading venture seemed infinitely larger and more precarious than it had in his father's office on the rainy day when the lad had so blithely proposed it. He understood, now, why it was that other boys could not stalk confidently into the offices of Armstrong & Company and be outfitted for a trading voyage.

His father's faith—his father's indulgent fatherhood—had provided the all-too-large credit for his ruin.

"Wisht she'd 'urry up," Bagg sighed.

"Just now," Archie declared, looking Skipper Bill in the eye, "it's up to Billy Topsail."

"Billy's a good boy," said the skipper.

Little Donald North—who had all along been a thoroughly serviceable but inconspicuous member of the crew—began to shed unwilling tears.

"Wisht she'd 'urry up," Bagg whimpered.

"*There she is!*" Skipper Bill roared.

It was true. There she was. Far off at sea—away beyond Grief Head at the entrance to Hook-and-Line—the smoke of a steamer surely appeared, a black cloud in the misty, glowering day. It was the *Grand Lake.* There was no other steamer on the coast. Cap'n Hand—Archie's friend, Cap'n Hand, with whom he had

sailed on the sealing voyage of the stout old *Dictator*—was in command. She would soon make harbour. Archie's load vanished; from despair he was lifted suddenly into a wild hilarity which nothing would satisfy but a roaring wrestle with Skipper Bill. The *Grand Lake* would presently be in; she would proceed full steam to Jolly Harbour, she would pass a line to the *Spot Cash*, she would jerk the little schooner from her rocky berth on Blow-Me-Down, and presently that selfsame wilful little craft would be legging it for St. John's.

But was it the *Grand Lake?*

"Lads," the skipper declared, when the steamer was in view, "it sure is the *Grand Lake*."

They watched her.

"Queer!" Skipper Bill muttered, at last.

"What's queer?" asked Archie.

"She should be turnin' in," the skipper replied. "What's Cap'n Hand thinkin' about?"

"Wisht she'd 'urry up," said Bagg.

The boys were bewildered. The steamer should by this time have had her nose turned towards Hook-and-Line. To round Grief Head she was keeping amazingly far out to sea.

"Wonderful queer!" said the anxious skipper.

The *Grand Lake* steamed past Hook-and-Line and disappeared in the mist. Evidently she was in haste. Presently there was not so much as a trail of smoke to be descried at sea.

CHAPTER XXXIII

In Which Billy Topsail, Besieged by Wreckers, Sleeps on Duty and Thereafter Finds Exercise For His Wits. In Which, also, a Lighted Candle is Suspended Over a Keg of Powder and Precipitates a Critical Moment While Billy Topsail Turns Pale With Anxiety

AT Jolly Harbour, meantime, where Billy Topsail kept watch, except for the flutter of an apron or skirt when the women went to the well for water, there was no sign of life at the cottages the livelong day. No boats ran out to the fishing-grounds; no men were on the flakes; the salmon nets and lobster-traps were not hauled. Billy prepared a spirited defense with the guns, which he charged heavily with powder, omitting the bullets. This done, he awaited the attack, meaning to let his wits or his arms deal with the situation, according to developments.

The responsibility was heavy, the duty anxious; and Billy could not forget what Archie had said about the firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company.

"I 'low there was nothing for it but t' leave me in charge," he thought, as he paced the deck that night. "But 'twill be a job now to save her if they come."

Billy fancied, from time to time, that he heard the splash of oars; but the night was dark, and although he peered long and listened intently, he could discover no boat in the shadows. And when the day came, with the comparative security of light, he was inclined to think that his fancy had been tricking him.

"But it might have been the punts slippin' in from the harbours above and below," he thought, suddenly. "I wonder if 'twas."

He spent most of that day lying on a coil of rope on the deck of the cabin—dozing and delighting himself with long day-dreams. When the night fell, it fell dark and foggy. An easterly wind overcast the sky and blew a thick mist from the open sea. Lights twinkled in the cottages ashore, somewhat blurred by the mist, but elsewhere it was dark; the nearer rocks were outlined by their deeper black.

"'Twill be now," Billy thought, "or 'twill be never. Skipper Bill will sure be back with the *Grand Lake* to-morrow."

Some time after midnight, while Billy was pacing the deck to keep himself warm and awake, he was hailed from the shore.

"'Tis from the point at the narrows," he thought. "Sure, 'tis Skipper Bill come back."

Again he heard the hail—his own name, coming from that point at the narrows.

"Billy, b'y! Billy!"

"Aye, sir! Who are you?"

"Skipper Bill, b'y!" came the answer. "Fetch the quarter-boat. We're aground and leakin'."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Quick, lad! I wants t' get aboard."

Billy leaped from the rail to the quarter-boat. He was ready to cast off when he heard a splash in the darkness behind him. That splash gave him pause. Were the wreckers trying to decoy him from the ship? They had a legal right to salve an abandoned vessel. He clambered aboard, determined, until he had better assurance of the safety of his charge, to let Skipper Bill and his crew, if it were indeed they, make a shift for comfort on the rocks until morning. "Skipper Bill, sir!" he called. "Can you swim?"

"Aye, b'y! But make haste."

"I'll show a light for you, sir, if you want t' swim out, but I'll not leave the schooner."

At that there was a laugh—an unmistakable chuckle—sounding whence the boy had heard the splash of an oar. It was echoed to right and left. Then a splash or two, a creak or two and a whisper. After that all was still again.

"'Tis lucky, now, I didn't go," Billy thought. "'Twas a trick, for sure. But how did they know my name?"

That was simple enough, when he came to think about it. When the skipper had warned the first fisherman off, he had ordered Billy forward by name. Wreckers they were, then—simple, good-hearted folk, believing in their right to what the sea cast up—and now bent on "salving" what they could, but evidently seeking to avoid a violent seizure of the cargo.

Billy appreciated this feeling. He had himself no wish to meet an assault in force, whether in the persons of such good-natured fellows as the man who had grinned at him on the morning of the wreck, or in those of a more villainous cast. He hoped it was to be a game of wits; and now the lad smiled.

"'Tis likely," he thought, "that I'll keep it safe."

For an hour or more there was no return of the alarm. The harbour water rippled under the winds; the rigging softly rattled and sang aloft; the swish of breakers drifted in from the narrows.

Billy sat full in the light of the deck lamps, with a gun in his hands, that all the eyes, which he felt sure were peering at him from the darkness roundabout, might see that he was alive to duty.

As his weariness increased, he began to think that the wreckers had drawn off, discouraged. Once he nodded; again he nodded, and awoke with a start; but he was all alone on the deck, as he had been.

Then, to occupy himself, he went below to light the cabin candle. For a moment, before making ready to go on deck again, he sat on the counter, lost in thought. He did not hear the prow of a punt strike the *Spot Cash* amidships, did not hear the whispers and soft laughter of men coming over the side by stealth, did not hear the tramp of feet coming aft. What startled him was a rough voice and a burst of laughter.

"Come aboard, skipper, sir!"

The companionway framed six weather-beaten, bearded faces. There was a grin on each, from

the first, which was clear to its smallest wrinkle in the candle-light, to those which were vanishing and reappearing in the shadows behind. Billy seemed to be incapable of word or action.

"Come to report, sir," said the nearest wrecker. "We seed you was aground, young skipper, and we thought we'd help you ashore with the cargo."

Billy rested his left hand on the head of a powder keg, which stood on end on the counter beside him. His right stole towards the candlestick. There was a light in his blue eyes—a glitter or a twinkle—which might have warned the wreckers, had they known him better.

"I order you ashore!" he said, slowly. "I order you *all* ashore. You've no right aboard this ship. If I had my gun ——"

"Sure, you left it on deck."

"If I had my gun," Billy pursued, "I'd have the right t' shoot you down."

The manner of the speech—the fierce intensity of it—impressed the wreckers. They perceived that the boy's face had turned pale, that his eyes were flashing strangely. They were unused to such a depth of passion. It may be that they were reminded of a bear at bay.

"I believe he'd do it," said one.

An uneasy quiet followed; and in that silence Billy heard the prow of another punt strike the ship. More footfalls came shuffling aft—other faces peered down the companionway. One man pushed his way through the group and made as if to come down the ladder.

"Stand back!" Billy cried.

The threat in that shrill cry brought the man to a stop. He turned; and that which he saw caused him to fall back upon his fellows. There was an outcry and a general falling away from the cabin door. Some men ran forward to the punts.

"The lad's gone mad!" said one. "Leave us get ashore!"

Billy had whipped the stopper out of the hole in the head of the powder keg, had snatched the candle from the socket, carefully guarding its flame, and now sat, triumphantly gazing up, with the butt of the candle through the hole in the keg and the flame flickering above its depths.

"Men," said he, when they had gathered again at the door, "if I let that candle slip through my fingers, you know what'll happen." He paused; then he went on, speaking in a

quivering voice: "My friends left me in charge o' this here schooner, and I've been caught nappin'. If I'd been on deck, you wouldn't have got aboard. But now you are aboard, and 'tis all because I didn't do my duty. Do you think I care what becomes o' me now? Do you think I don't care whether I do my duty or not? I tell you fair that if you don't go ashore I'll drop the candle in the keg. If one o' you dares come down that ladder, I'll drop it. If I hear you lift the hatches off the hold, I'll drop it. If I hear you strike a blow at the ship, I'll drop it. Hear me?" he cried. "If you don't go, I'll drop it!"

The candle trembled between Billy's fingers. It slipped, fell an inch or more, but his fingers gripped it again before he lost it. The wreckers recoiled, now convinced that the lad meant no less than he said.

"I guess you'd do it, b'y," said the man who had attempted to descend. "Sure," he repeated, with a glance of admiration for the boy's pluck, "I guess you would."

"'Tis not comfortable here," said another. "Sure, he might drop it by accident. Make haste, b'ys! Let's get ashore."

"Good-night, skipper, sir!" said the first.

"Good-night, sir!" said Billy, grimly.

With that they went over the side. Billy heard them leap into the punts, push off, and row away. Then silence fell—broken only by the ripple of the water, the noise of the wind in the rigging, the swish of breakers drifting in. The boy waited a long time, not daring to venture on deck, lest they should be lying in wait for him at the head of the ladder. He listened for a footfall, a noise in the hold, the shifting of the deck cargo; but he heard nothing.

When the candle had burned low, he lighted another, put the butt through the hole, and jammed it. At last he fell asleep, with his head resting on a pile of dress-goods; and the candle was burning unattended. He was awakened by a hail from the deck.

"Billy, b'y, where is you?"

It was Skipper Bill's hearty voice; and before Billy could tumble up the ladder, the skipper's bulky body closed the exit.

"She's all safe, sir!" said the boy.

Skipper Bill at that moment caught sight of the lighted candle. He snatched it from its place, dropped it on the floor and stamped on it. He was a-tremble from head to foot.

"What's this foolery?" he demanded, angrily.

Billy explained.

"It was plucky, b'y," said the skipper, "but 'twas wonderful risky."

"Sure, there was no call to be afraid."

"No call to be afraid!" cried the skipper.

"No, sir—no," said Billy. "There's not a grain of powder in the keg."

"Empty—an empty keg?" the skipper roared.

"Do you think," said Billy, indignantly, "that I'd have risked the schooner that way if 'twas a full keg?"

Skipper Bill stared; and for a long time afterwards he could not look at Billy without staring.

CHAPTER XXXIV

In Which Skipper Bill, as a Desperate Expedient, Contemplates the Use of His Teeth, and Archie Armstrong, to Save His Honour, Sets Sail in a Basket, But Seems to Have Come a Cropper

BILLY TOPSAIL suddenly demanded:

"Where's the *Grand Lake?*"

"The *Grand Lake*," Skipper Bill drawled, with a sigh, "is somewheres t' the s'uth'ard footin' it for St. John's."

"You missed her!" Billy accused.

"Didn't neither," said the indignant skipper. "She steamed right past Hook-an'-Line without a wink in that direction."

This was shocking news.

"Anyhow," said little Donald North, as though it mattered importantly, "we seed her smoke."

Billy looked from Donald to Jimmie, from Jimmie to Bagg, from Bagg to the skipper; and then he stared about.

"Where's Archie?" he asked.

"Archie," the skipper replied, "is footin' it for St. John's, too. 'Skipper Bill,' says Archie, 'Billy Topsail has kep' that schooner safe. I knows he has. It was up t' Billy Topsail t' save the firm from wreckers an' I'll lay you that Billy Topsail has saved the firm. Now, Skipper Bill,' says Archie, 'you go back t' Jolly Harbour an' get that schooner off. You get her off somehow. Get her off jus' as soon as you can,' says he, 'an' fetch her to St. John's.'

"'I *can't* get her off,' says I.

"'Yes, you can, too, Skipper Bill,' says he. 'I'll lay you can get her off. I don't know how you'll do it,' says he; 'but *I'll lay you can!*'

"'I'll get her off, Archie,' says I, 'if I got t' jump in the sea an' haul her off with a line in my teeth.'

"'I knowed you would,' says he; 'an' you got the best teeth, Skipper Bill,' says he, 't' be found on this here coast. As for me, skipper,' says he, 'I'm goin' down t' St. John's if I got t' walk on water. I told my father that I'd be in his office on the first o' September—an' I'm goin' t' be there. If I can't be there with the fish I can be there with the promise o' fish; an' I can back

that promise up with a motor boat, a sloop yacht an' a pony an' cart. I don't know how I'm goin' t' get t' St. John's,' says he, 'an' I don't want t' walk on a wet sea like this; but I'm goin' t' get there somehow by the first o' September, an' I'm goin' to assoom'—yes, sir, '*assoom*, Skipper Bill,' says Archie—'I'm goin' to assoom that you'll fetch down the *Spot Cash* an' the tail an' fins of every last tom-cod aboard that there craft.'

"An' I'm goin' t' *do* it!" Skipper Bill roared in conclusion, with a slap of the counter with his hairy fist that made the depleted stock rattle on the shelves.

"Does you t-t-think you c-c-*can* haul her off with your teeth?" Donald North asked with staring eyes.

Bill o' Burnt Bay burst into a shout of laughter.

"We'll have no help from the Jolly Harbour folk," said Billy Topsail, gravely. "They're good-humoured men," he added, "but they means t' have this here schooner if they can."

"Never mind," said Skipper Bill, with an assumption of far more hope than was in his honest, willing heart. "We'll get her off afore they comes again."

"Wisht you'd 'urry up," said Bagg.

With the *Spot Cash* high and dry—with a small crew aboard—with a numerous folk, clever and unfriendly (however good-humoured they were), bent on possessing that which they were fully persuaded it was their right to have—with no help near at hand and small prospect of the appearance of aid—the task which Archie Armstrong had set Bill o' Burnt Bay was the most difficult one the old sea-dog had ever encountered in a long career of hard work, self-dependence and tight places. The Jolly Harbour folk might laugh and joke, they might even offer sympathy, they might be the most hospitable, tender-hearted, God-fearing folk in the world; but tradition had taught them that what the sea cast up belonged righteously to the men who could take it, and they would with good consciences and the best humour in the world stand upon that doctrine. And Bill o' Burnt Bay would do no murder to prevent them: it was not the custom of the coast to do murder in such cases; and Archie Armstrong's last injunction had been to take no lives.

Bill o' Burnt Bay declared in growing wrath to the boys that he would come next door to murder.

"I'll pink 'em, anyhow," said he, as he loaded

his long gun. "*I'll* makes holes for earrings, ecod!"

Yes, sir; the skipper would show the Jolly Harbour folk how near a venturesome man could come to letting daylight into a Jolly Harbour hull without making a hopeless leak. Jus' t' keep 'em busy calking, ecod! How much of this was mere loud and saucy words—with how much real meaning the skipper spoke—even the skipper himself did not know. But, yes, sir; he'd show 'em in the morning. It was night, now, however—though near morning. Nobody would put out from shore before daybreak. They had been frightened off once. Skipper Bill's wrath could simmer to the boiling point. But a watch must be kept. No chances must be taken with the *Spot Cash*, and—

"Ahoy, Billy!" a pleasant voice called from the water.

The crew of the *Spot Cash* rushed on deck.

"Oh, ho!" another voice laughed. "Skipper's back, too, eh?"

"*With* a long—perfeckly trustworthy—loaded—gun," Skipper Bill solemnly replied.

The men in the punts laughed heartily.

"Sheer off!" Skipper Bill roared.

But in the protecting shadows of the night the punts came closer. And there was another laugh.

It chanced at Hook-and-Line Harbour before night—Skipper Bill had then for hours been gone towards Jolly Harbour—that a Labrador fishing craft put in for water. She was loaded deep; her decks were fairly awash with her load of fish, and at best she was squat and old and rotten—a basket to put to sea in. Here was no fleet craft; but she was south-bound, at any rate, and Archie Armstrong determined to board her. To get to St. John's—to open the door of his father's office on the first of September as he had promised—to explain and to reassure and even to present in hard cash the value of a sloop yacht and a pony and a motor boat—was the boy's feverish determination. He could not forget his father's grave words: "Your honour is involved." Perhaps he exaggerated the importance of them. His honour? The boy had no wish to be excused—had no liking for fatherly indulgence. He was wholly intent upon justifying his father's faith and satisfying his own sense of honourable obligation. It must be fish or

cash—fish or cash—and as it seemed it could not be fish it must therefore be cash.

It must be hard cash—cash down—paid on the first of September over his father's desk in the little office overlooking the wharves.

"Green Bay bound," the skipper of the Labrador craft replied to Archie's question.

That signified a landing at Ruddy Cove.

"I'll go along," said Archie.

"Ye'll not," the skipper snapped. "Ye'll not go along until ye mend your manners."

Archie started in amazement.

"*You'll* go along, will ye?" the skipper continued. "Is you the owner o' this here craft? Ye may *ask* t' go along; but whether ye go or not is for me—for *me*, ye cub!—t' say."

Archie straightened in his father's way. "My name," said he, shortly, "is Archibald Armstrong."

The skipper instantly touched his cap.

"I'm sorry, skipper," Archie went on, with a dignity of which his manner of life had long ago made him unconsciously master, "for having taken too much for granted. I want passage with you to Ruddy Cove, skipper, for which I'll pay."

"You're welcome, sir," said the skipper.

The *Wind and Tide* lay at Hook-and-Line that night in fear of the sea that was running. She rode so deep in the water, and her planks and rigging and sticks were at best so untrustworthy, that her skipper would not take her to sea. Next morning, however—and Archie subsequently recalled it—next morning the wind blew fair for the southern ports. Out put the old craft into a rising breeze and was presently wallowing her way towards Green Bay and Ruddy Cove. But there was no reckless sailing. Nothing that Archie could say with any appearance of propriety moved the skipper to urge her on. She was deep, she was old; she must be humoured along. Again, when night fell, she was taken into harbour for shelter. The wind still blew fair in the morning; she made a better day of it, but was once more safely berthed for the night. Day after day she crept down the coast, lurching along in the light, with unearthly shrieks of pain and complaint, and lying silent in harbour in the dark.

"'Wisht she'd 'urry up,'" thought Archie, with a dubious laugh, remembering Bagg.

It was the twenty-ninth of August and coming

on dark when the boy first caught sight of the cottages of Ruddy Cove.

"Mail-boat day," he thought, jubilantly. "The *Wind and Tide* will make it. I'll be in St. John's the day after to-morrow."

"Journey's end," said the skipper, coming up at that moment.

"I'm wanting to make the mail-boat," said Archie. "She's due at Ruddy Cove soon after dark."

"She'll be on time," said the skipper. "Hark!"

Archie heard the faint blast of a steamer's whistle.

"Is it she?" asked the skipper.

"Ay," Archie exclaimed; "and she's just leaving Fortune Harbour. She'll be at Ruddy Cove within the hour."

"I'm doubtin' that *we* will," said the skipper.

"Will you not run up a topsail?" the boy pleaded.

"Not for the queen o' England," the skipper replied, moving forward. "I've got my load—an' I've got the lives o' my crew—t' care for."

Archie could not gainsay it. The *Wind and Tide* had all the sail she could carry with un-

questionable safety. The boy watched the mail-boat's lights round the Head and pass through the tickle into the harbour of Ruddy Cove. Presently he heard the second blast of her deep-toned whistle and saw her emerge and go on her way. She looked cozy in the dusk, he thought: she was brilliant with many lights. In the morning she would connect with the east-bound cross-country express at Burnt Bay. And meantime he—this selfsame boastful Archie Armstrong—would lie stranded at Ruddy Cove. At that moment St. John's seemed infinitely far away.

CHAPTER XXXV

In Which Many Things Happen: Old Tom Topsail Declares Himself the Bully to Do It, Mrs. Skipper William Bounds Down the Path With a Boiled Lobster, the Mixed Accommodation Sways, Rattles, Roars, Puffs and Quits on a Grade in the Wilderness, Tom Topsail Loses His Way in the Fog and Archie Armstrong Gets Despairing Ear of a Whistle

AT Ruddy Cove, that night, when Archie was landed from the *Wind and Tide*, a turmoil of amazement instantly gave way to the very briskest consultation the wits of the place had ever known.

"There's no punt can make Burnt Bay the night," Billy Topsail's father declared.

"Nor the morrow night if the wind changes," old Jim Grimm added.

"Nor the next in a southerly gale," Job North put in.

"There's the *Wind an' Tide*," Tom Topsail suggested.

"She's a basket," said Archie; "and she's slower than a paddle punt."

"What's the weather?'

"Fair wind for Burnt Bay an' a starlit night."

"I've lost the express," said Archie, excitedly. "I must—I *must*, I tell you!—I must catch the mixed."

The Ruddy Cove faces grew long.

"I must," Archie repeated between his teeth.

The east-bound cross-country express would go through the little settlement of Burnt Bay in the morning. The mixed accommodation would crawl by at an uncertain hour of the following day. It was now the night of the twenty-ninth of August. One day—two days. The mixed accommodation would leave Burnt Bay for St. John's on the thirty-first of August.

"If she doesn't forget," said Job North, dryly.

"Or get tired an' rest too often," Jim Grimm added.

Archie caught an impatient breath.

"Look you, lad!" Tom Topsail declared, jumping up. "I'm the bully that will put you aboard!"

Archie flung open the door of Mrs. Skipper William's kitchen and made for the Topsail wharf with old Tom puffing and lumbering at his heels. Billy Topsail's mother was hailed

with the news. Before Tom had well made the punt shipshape for a driving cruise up the Bay she was on the wharf with a bucket of hardtack and a kettle of water. A frantic scream—perhaps, a shout—announced the coming of Mrs. Skipper William with a ham-bone and a great-coat. These tossed inboard, she roared a command to delay, gathered up her skirts and fled into the night, whence she emerged, bounding, with a package of tea and a boiled lobster. She had no breath left to bid them Godspeed when Tom Topsail cast off; but she waved her great soft arms, and her portly person shook with the violence of her good wishes. And up went the sail—and out fluttered the little jib—and the punt heeled to the harbour breeze—and Tom Topsail and Archie Armstrong darted away from the lights of Ruddy Cove towards the open sea.

The mixed accommodation, somewhere far back in the Newfoundland wilderness, came to the foot of a long grade. She puffed and valiantly choo-chooed. It was desperately hard work to climb that hill. A man might have walked beside her while she tried it. But she

surmounted the crest, at last, and, as though immensely proud of herself, rattled down towards the boulder-strewn level at an amazing rate of speed. On she went, swaying, puffing, roaring, rattling, as though she had no intention whatever of coming to a stop before she had brought her five hundred mile run to a triumphant conclusion in the station at St. John's.

Even the engineer was astonished.

"Doin' fine," thought the fireman, proud of his head of steam.

"She'll make up them three hours afore mornin'," the engineer hoped.

On the next grade the mixed accommodation lagged. It was a steep grade. She seemed to lose enthusiasm with every yard of puffing progress. She began to pant—to groan—to gasp with horrible fatigue. Evidently she fancied it a cruel task to be put to. And the grade was long—and it was outrageously steep—and they had overloaded the little engine with freight cars —and she wasn't yet half-way up. It would take the heart out of any engine. But she buckled to, once more, and trembled and panted and gained a yard or two. It was hard work; it was killing work. It was a ghastly outrage to demand such

effort of *any* engine, most of all of a rat-trap attached to a mixed accommodation on an ill-graded road. The Rat-Trap snorted her indignation. She howled with agony and despair.

And then she quit.

"What's the matter now?" a passenger asked the conductor, in a coach far in the rear.

"Looks to me as if we'd have to uncouple and run on to the next siding with half the train," the conductor replied. "But it *may* be the fire-box."

"What's the matter with the fire-box?"

"She has a habit of droppin' out," said the conductor.

"We'll be a day late in St. John's," the passenger grumbled.

The conductor laughed. "You will," said he, "if the trouble is with the fire-box."

While the mixed accommodation was panting on the long grade, Tom Topsail's punt, Burnt Bay bound, was splashing through a choppy sea, humoured along by a clever hand and a heart that understood her whims. It was blowing smartly; but the wind was none too much for the tiny craft, and she was making the best of it. At this

rate—with neither change nor failure of the wind—Tom Topsail would land Archie Armstrong in Burnt Bay long before the accommodation had begun to think of achieving that point in her journey across the island. There was no failure of the wind as the night spent itself; it blew true and fair until the rosy dawn came softly out of the east. The boy awoke from a long doze to find the punt overhauling the first barren islands of the long estuary at the head of which the Burnt Bay settlement is situated.

With the most favourable weather there was a day's sailing and more yet to be done.

"How's the weather?" was Archie's first question.

"Broodin'," Tom Topsail drawled.

Archie could find no menace in the dawn.

"Jus' broodin'," Topsail repeated.

Towards night it seemed that a change and a gale of wind might be hatched by the brooding day. The wind fluttered to the east and blew up a thickening fog.

"We've time an' t' spare," said Topsail, in the soggy dusk. "Leave us go ashore an' rest."

They landed, presently, on a promising island, and made a roaring fire. The hot tea and the

lobster and the hard-bread—and the tales of Topsail—and the glow and warmth of the fire—were grateful to Archie. He fell sound asleep, at last, with his greatcoat over him; and Tom Topsail was soon snoring, too. In the meantime the mixed accommodation, back in the wilderness, had surmounted the grade, had dropped three heavy cars at a way station, and was rattling on her way towards Burnt Bay with an energy and determination that surprised her weary passengers and could only mean that she was bound to make up at least some lost time or explode in the attempt.

Morning came—it seemed to Archie Armstrong that it never would come—morning came in a thick fog to Tom Topsail and the lad. In a general way Tom Topsail had his bearings, but he was somewhat doubtful about trusting to them. The fog thickened with an easterly wind. It blew wet and rough and cold. The water, in so far as it could be seen from the island, was breaking in white-capped waves; and an easterly wind was none of the best on the Burnt Bay course. But Tom Topsail and Archie put confidently out. The mixed accommodation was not due at Burnt Bay until 12:33. She would doubtless be late:

she was always late. There was time enough; perhaps there would be time and to spare. The wind switched a bit to the south of east, however, and became nearly adverse; and down came the fog, thick and blinding. A hundred islands, and the narrowing main-shore to port and starboard, were wiped out of sight. There were no longer landmarks.

"Man," Tom Topsail declared, at last, "I don't know where I is!"

"Drive on, Tom," said Archie.

The punt went forward in a smother of water.

"Half after eleven," Archie remarked.

Tom Topsail hauled the sheet taut to pick up another puff of wind. An hour passed. Archie had lost the accommodation if she were on time.

"They's an island dead ahead," said Tom. "I feels it. Hark!" he added. "Does you hear the breakers?"

Archie could hear the wash of the sea.

"Could it be Right-In-the-Way?" Tom Topsail wondered. "Or is it Mind-Your-Eye Point?"

There was no help in Archie.

"If 'tis Right-In-the-Way," said Tom, "I'd

have me bearin's. 'Tis a marvellous thick fog, this," he complained.

Mind-Your-Eye is a point of the mainland.

"I'm goin' ashore t' find out," Tom determined.

Landed, however, he could make nothing of it. Whether Right-In-the-Way, an island near by Burnt Bay, or Mind-Your-Eye, a long projection of the main-shore, there was no telling. The fog hid all outlines. If it were Right-In-the Way, Tom Topsail could land Archie in Burnt Bay within half an hour; if it were Mind-Your-Eye point—well, maybe.

"Hark!" Tom exclaimed.

Archie could hear nothing.

"Did you not hear it?" said Tom.

"What, man? Hear *what?*"

"*That!*" Tom ejaculated.

Archie heard the distant whistle of a train.

"I knows this place," Tom burst out, in vast excitement. "'Tis Mind-Your-Eye. They's a cut road from here t' the railway. 'Tis but half a mile, lad."

Followed by Archie, Tom Topsail plunged into the bush. They did not need to be told that the mixed accommodation was labouring on

a steep grade from Red Brook Bridge. They did not need to be told that a little fire, builded by the track before she ran past, a flaring signal in the fog, would stop her. With them it was merely a problem of getting to the track in time to start that fire.

CHAPTER XXXVI

And Last: In Which Archie Armstrong Hangs His Head in His Father's Office, the Pale Little Clerk Takes a Desperate Chance, Bill o' Burnt Bay Loses His Breath, and there is a Grand Dinner in Celebration of the Final Issue, at Which the Amazement of the Crew of the "Spot Cash" is Equalled by Nothing in the World Except Their Delight

IT was the first of September. A rainy day, this, in St. John's: the wind in the east, thick fog blowing in from the open. Sir Archibald's grate was crackling in its accustomed cheerful way. Rain lashed the office windows at intervals; a melancholy mist curtained the harbour from view. Sir Archibald was anxious. He drummed on the desk with his finger-tips; he paced the office floor, he scowled, he pursed his lips, he dug his restless hands deep in his pockets. The expected had not happened. It was now two o'clock. Sir Archibald was used to going home at three. And it was now two o'clock—no, by Jove! it was eight after. Sir Archibald walked impatiently to the window. It was evident that the fog was the cause of his

impatience. He scowled at it. No, no (thought he); no schooner could make St. John's harbour in a fog like that. And the winds of the week had been fair winds from the French Shore. Still the expected had not happened. *Why* had the expected not happened?

A pale little clerk put his head in at the door in a very doubtful way.

"Skipper of the *Black Eagle*, sir," said he. "Clerk, too," he added.

"Show 'em in," Sir Archibald growled.

What happened need not be described. It was both melancholy and stormy without; there was a roaring tempest within. Sir Archibald was not used to giving way to aggravation; but he was now presently embarked on a rough sea of it, from which, indeed, he had difficulty in reaching quiet harbour again. It was not the first interview he had had with the skipper and clerk of the *Black Eagle* since that trim craft had returned from the French Shore trade. But it turned out to be the final one. The books of the *Black Eagle* had been examined; her stores had been appraised, her stock taken, her fish weighed. And the result had been so amazing that Sir Archibald had not only been mystified

but enraged. It was for this reason that when Skipper George Rumm, with Tommy Bull, the rat-eyed little clerk, left the presence of Sir Archibald Armstrong, the prediction of the clerk had come true: there were two able-bodied seamen looking for a berth on the streets of St. John's. First of all, however, they set about finding Tom Tulk o' Twillingate; but this, somehow or other, the discreet Tom Tulk never would permit them to do.

By Sir Archibald's watch it was now exactly 2:47. Sir Archibald rose from the chair that was his throne.

"I'm sorry," he sighed. "I had hoped——"

Again the pale little clerk put his head in at the door. This time he was grinning shamelessly.

"Well?" said Sir Archibald. "What is it?"

"Master Archie, sir."

Archie shook hands with his father in a perfunctory way. Sir Archibald's cheery greeting —and with what admiration and affection and happiness his heart was filled at that moment!— Sir Archibald's cheery greeting failed in his throat. Archie was prodigiously scowling. This

was no failure of affection; nor was it an evil regard towards his creditor, who would have for him, as the boy well knew, nothing but the warmest sympathy. It was shame and sheer despair. In every line of the boy's drawn face—in his haggard eyes and trembling lips—in his dejected air—even in his dishevelled appearance (as Sir Archibald sadly thought)—failure was written. What the nature of that failure was Sir Archibald did not know. How it had come about he could not tell. But it *was* failure. It was failure—and there was no doubt about it. Sir Archibald's great fatherly heart warmed towards the boy. He did not resent the brusque greeting; he understood. And Sir Archibald came at that moment nearer to putting his arms about his big son in the most sentimental fashion in the world than he had come in a good many years.

"Father," said Archie, abruptly, "please sit down."

Sir Archibald sat down.

"I owe you a thousand dollars, sir," Archie went on, coming close to his father's desk and looking Sir Archibald straight in the eye. "It is due to-day, and I can't pay it—now."

Sir Archibald would not further humiliate the boy by remitting the debt. There was no help for Archie in this crisis. Nobody knew it better than Sir Archibald.

"I have no excuse, sir," said Archie, with his head half-defiantly thrown back, "but I should like to explain."

Sir Archibald nodded.

"I meant to be back in time to realize on—well—on those things you have given me—on the yacht and the boat and the pony," Archie went on, finding a little difficulty with a lump of shame in his throat; "but I missed the mail-boat at Ruddy Cove, and I ——"

The pale little clerk once more put his sharp little face in at the door.

"Judd," said Sir Archibald, sternly, "be good enough not to interrupt me."

"But, sir ——"

"Judd," Sir Archibald roared, "shut that door!"

The pale little clerk took his life in his hands, and, turning infinitely paler, gasped:

"Skipper of the *Spot Cash* to see you, sir."

"WHAT!" shouted Archie.

Judd had fled.

"Skipper—of—the—*Spot—Cash!*" Archie muttered stupidly.

Indeed, yes. The hearty, grinning, triumphant skipper of the *Spot Cash!* And more, too, following sheepishly in his wake: no less than the full complement of other members of the trading firm of Topsail, Armstrong, Grimm & Company, even to Donald North, who was winking with surprise, and Bagg, the cook, ex-gutter-snipe from London, who could not wink at all from sheer amazement. And then—first thing of all—Archie Armstrong and his father shook hands in quite another way. Whereupon this same Archie Armstrong (while Sir Archibald fairly bellowed with delighted laughter) fell upon Bill o' Burnt Bay, and upon the crew of the *Spot Cash*, right down to Bagg (who had least to lose), and beat the very breath out of their bodies in an hilarious expression of joy.

"Dickerin'," Bill o' Burnt Bay explained, by and by.

"Dickering?" ejaculated Archie.

"Jus' simon-pure dickerin'," Bill o' Burnt Bay insisted, a bit indignantly.

snowy whiteness and glorious bounty of the table spread before them—but there was nothing in the whole wide world to equal the astonishment of the crew of the *Spot Cash*—nothing to approach it, indeed—except their fine delight.

THE END

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